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XXX CANTOS OF EZRA POUND

(An Incursion into Poetics)

> ' The poets in recent times follow a peculiar doctrine. They compose poetry out of words, compose poetry out of learning, and compose poetry out of opinion. They are laborious enough, but theirs is no longer the poetry of the ancients.'
>
> Yen Yü, *Tsang-Lang Discourse on Poetry* (12th Century A.D.).

A *DRAFT of XXX Cantos* has recently been published in America[1] with enthusiastic blurbs on the dust-wrapper from Eliot, Joyce, Hemingway, William Carlos Williams and Hugh Walople (*sic.*). A few misprints have been corrected, but the text is substantially that of the Hours Press limited edition.

The Cantos have suffered more from their admirers than from their detractors, for, if the latter have concentrated upon obvious faults, the former have founded their praise on vague generalities or meaningless jargon. Pound's previous work leads up unmistakably to the Cantos. In his early experiments in complicated verse forms, in his translations and in his conversational epigrams he moved towards this ' poem of some length.' The Cantos fuse together his three approaches: translation, reconstruction of figures of the past, and criticism of contemporary society. The first two approaches may best be apprehended via *Homage to Sextus Propertius* and the third via *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. *Mauberley* has already been admirably analyzed and it is a poem which must convince. The *Homage* lays open the ground for controversy.

Eliot, commenting in his equivocal introduction to the *Selected Poems* on his omission of the *Homage*, points to it as ' one of the

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[1]Farrar and Rinehart, $2.50.

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necessary prologomena to the *Cantos.*' He insists that the poem is a criticism of Propertius and a *persona* of Pound. This is an overstatement of the obvious, for any translation must be a criticism of the author translated and a selection must be a commentary on the selector. *Homage to Sextus Propertius* is a poem in eleven sections, written in a subtle approximation to Latin elegiacs. Eight sections are translations of whole or part elegies and three are patchworks from two or more elegies. VI alone is a real composition, for in it Pound has used five elegies as his basic material. There is scarcely a line in the *Homage* that is not direct translation, or paraphrase. This is the extremest license which Pound permits himself:

> Cæsar plots against India,
> Tigris and Euphrates shall, from now on, flow at his bidding,
> Tibet shall be full of Roman policemen,
> The Parthians shall get used to our statuary
> and acquire a Roman religion ;
> (VI. 6-10)

with which compare:

> Arma deus Cæsar dites meditatur ad Indos . . .
> Tigris et Euphrates sub tua iura fluent ;
> sera, sed Ausoniis ueniet prouincia uirgis ;
> assuescent Latio Partha tropæa Ioui.
> (Prop. *Eleg.* III. iv. 1-6)

A realization that the method of the *Homage* is superimposed on the method of *Mauberley* elucidates large tracts of the Cantos. Canto I is largely a translation of the Latin version of the Odyssey by Andreas Divus Justinopolitanus. Pound's intention is to indicate the grafting of the mediæval mind on to the Greek culture re-discovered at the Renaissance. In so doing he produces the best specimen of a translation of the Odyssey into English that I know. Canto III contains a literal translation from the Poema de Myo Cid. In the later Cantos translation at length is used less and a method of juxtaposition substituted. In Canto IV the juxtaposition is still literary, a fusion of Provençal poets and Ovid ; Guillaume de Cabestang parallels Itys and Peire Vidal Actaeon. In Canto

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XVIII, which deals with exploitation, the spelling ' Kahn ' for ' Khan ' links Kubla with the family of bankers and the Morgan firm. The scatological Cantos, XIV and XV, are criticisms of Pound's contemporaries and, too blatantly, an expression of his hatreds. His contemporary allusions are usually less tangled than his references to the past and it is not difficult to extract Lindbergh, Levine, Ruth Elder, Hinchcliffe and the Hon. Elsie Mackay from the remarkable passage on Atlantic flights in Canto XXVIII.

It is commonly, and not erroneously, said that the Cantos are largely the reading and attitudes of Ezra Pound ; something that we have met with before, done over again. Here is the Pound of *Lustra* and *Cathay* with added sureness of technique ; here is the Pound of the ' movements,' the booster for Gaudier, Antheil, Fenollosa, T. E. Hulme and the fallacies of Major Douglas. There are signs of Pound the imagist, and he has not entirely shaken off Pater, the Pre-Raphaelites and Lionel Johnson, early formative influences. Often it is enough that Pound has been interested. But it is incorrect to call the Cantos the game of a pedant. The enthusiasms, the wilful misspellings, the misprints (ʿγπεριονίδας still stands for ὑπεριονίδας in Canto XXIII), the omission of accents in Italian and Spanish, the Japanese spelling of Chinese names, the transcription of the Malatesta letters into dialect and English of various periods—these are not pedantry but dilettantism. I use the word honourably, as does Pound, with the implication of ' diletto.' The reading of Pound is sufficiently individual to be a criticism. It is not less miguided to judge the Cantos by the anthropological methods of the *Waste Land* than to judge the *Waste Land* by the narrative methods of the Victorians. Pound has written: ' Neither prose nor drama can attain poetic intensity save by construction, almost by scenario ; by so arranging the circumstances that some perfectly simple speech, perception, dogmatic statement appears in abnormal vigor.' He has applied the method of scenario to the Cantos. But spatial adjacency, mere contiguity, is not enough. There must be continuity. By making past and present people and events his mouthpieces, his personæ, Pound too often exalts himself by re-iterations of his personality instead of organizing his experience. His scenario becomes like Rimbaud's, ' un opéra fabuleux,' and he must say with Rimbaud, ' je réservais la traduction.' A specific reference to the past provokes a

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reaction which has to be regulated and determined by the scheme of the poem and by technique. Otherwise it will lead the reader away on irrelevant courses of thought. Pound suggests too much. There are too many implications in the Cantos and too few implications that are completely seizable. Coleridge held that ' every work of art must contain within itself the reason why it is itself and not otherwise.' Quotations and allusions, historical, literary and anthropological, will bring to readers who recognize them the pleasure resulting from a realization of their fitness as punctuation, emotive sign-posts, structural pivots, but these details must be re-shaped so as to stand in their own right. The general cultural background of the reader determines his apprehension of such detail and this cultural background cannot be forced. By stating them too barely Pound frequently leaves his contributory details in the air. In

> ' Pergusa . . . pool . . . pool . . . Gargaphia,
> ' Pool . . . pool of Salmacis '
>
> (Canto IV)

each Ovidian spring is historically related to the metamorphoses in the Canto, but the bareness of the statement prevents the lines from enriching the apprehension of the reader.

Pound has recognized what Edgell Rickword calls ' the presence of concepts in mutual irritation '[1]:

> ' Beer-bottle on the statue's pediment !
> ' That, Fritz, is the era, to-day against the past,
> ' Contemporary.'
>
> (Canto VII)

But Pound's practice is insufficiently angled. His personæ are too often paper puppets. It would be absurd to ask for ' characters ' in the conventional meaning of the novel-critics, but the method of the mystic is too vague for poetry. The mystics make frequent use of numbers and geometric figures in attempting to express their experiences ; they correlate their particular emotion with abstractions and the most rigid laws in order to give it a universal validity. This will probably be convincing enough for the mystic

[1] ' The Modern Poet,' *The Calendar,* December 1925.

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himself, but is unlikely to convince others. In his handling of ornament Pound is, in intention, with Dante, but his results are more akin to the work of Spenser. Spenser's figures appear at haphazard and are elaborated without reference to their allegorical significance ; Dante's, though rarely painted in, are vivified by their interactions. Ornament at the highest level may have the function of keeping the seriousness of the writer in suspension and the faculties of the reader in suspense. Thus, in Dante, the externals of description can be used to express emotion in its lowest terms:

> per entro sè l'eterna margherita
> ne recepette, com'acqua recepe
> raggio di luce, permanendo unita.
>
> (*Par.* II. 34-36)

But this method can only hold as long as the passage is placed in its relation to the scheme of the poem.

By introducing his contemporary references through people and events instead of through imagery, through metaphor implied or stated, Pound has lost a great source of poetic strength. When spiral nebulæ, protons, dendrites and eoanthropos become part of the reading public's emotional life they at once become material for poetry ; when they are completely assimilated, that is, taken for granted, they may become dangerous counters. Topical material must be used at a time when it is beginning to impinge forcibly on the minds of the mass. Pound's contemporary references to events and people are often still-born, because these had only an ephemeral interest and a bare statement of them carries emotive force only a few weeks after the report in the daily press. He has sometimes in his attempt to reach a state of timelessness pushed even the present into the past.

Pound's remark that ' great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree '[1] is crucial. His division of poetic method into three categories is completely at fault, for, in order that the highest complex of meaning may be expressed, melopoeia, phanopoeia and logopoeia must all be merged simultaneously. Pound, in most matters of technique, as Eliot

[1] *How to Read*, p. 21.

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has said, ' is still in advance of our own generation and even the literary generation after us '[1] ; yet not only in ideas but in syntactical experiment he is unprofitable. His insistence on simplicity of phrase and bareness of image has hindered his expression of complex states. His language never works at high pressure as does Donne's or Hopkins's to illuminate an unusual condition of mind. Logopoeia, if the word has meaning, is remarkably absent in Pound's work, as it is strongest in the Metaphysicals and the Symbolists. The idea-progressions of the Symbolists are a variation on the conceits of the Metaphysicals ; the Symbolists omit one term of the statement or else abandon link-words entirely. Compare

> Those armes, wherein wide open
> Loues fleete was wont to putt,
> Shall layd acrosse betoken
> That havens mouth is shutt.
> Myne eyes noe light shall cherish
> For shipps att sea distrest,
> But darkeling let them perish
> Or splitt against my breast.
>
> (AURELIAN TOWNSHEND, Though regions farr devided)

and

> J'aurai passé ma vie le long des quais
> A faillir m'embarquer
> Dans de bien funestes histoires,
> Tout cela pour l'amour
> De mon cœur fou de la gloire d'amour.
>
> Oh, qu'ils sont pittoresques les trains manqués !
>
> (LAFORGUE, *Derniers Vers*, X)

Townshend works out a parallelism step by step, Laforgue notes down salient points and supresses his intermediary processes. Both methods are rich, but they must be bound up with weight in the phrase and positioning in the poem. Such a highly figurative style

[1] ' Isolated Superiority,' *The Dial*, Jan. 1928.

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would be out of place in a work having an intricate symbolical structure, since the imagery would be open to symbolical interpretation. Dante carefully avoids metaphor and introduces his vivid comparisons with a warning ' così ' or ' simile.' Such comparisons are not introduced to strengthen the phrasing but to accustom us to some unfamiliar situation or to help us to visualize accurately some difficult or fantastic figure or incident. Pound's method is, in intention, that of Dante and we must apply to the Cantos criteria applicable to the *Divina Commedia*.

A method based on a symbolism having various strata of interpretation may be simple syntactically, for the complexity of the ideas and emotions in a given passage is indicated by the relation of the passage to the scheme of the poem. Syntactical intricacies offer a complex of interpretations in the phrase and sentence. Hence two very different aspects of meaning and interpretation may be distinguished. A highly charged diction makes use of symbols which, exposed to analysis, translate out into logical propositions fairly close verbally to their original form ; a simple diction employed in the exposition of a scheme or an allegory may translate out into a form having very little verbal resemblance to the original presentation. Interpretation of the first kind of writing should be analytical, of the second explanatory and synthesizing. Dante, therefore, offers comparatively little to a detailed syntactical dissection, since the multiple meanings must be extracted by reference to the ground-plan of the poem.

A prime difficulty in arriving at the ordering principle behind the Cantos is, as I have suggested before, the bareness of statement. Cantos XVIII and XIX are concerned mainly with examples of exploitation, but it would be extremely difficult to unravel the specific instances without external aids. The *Autobiography* of Lincoln Steffens provides the clue to a long passage on pages 86 and 87. After the account of the Austrian commercial representative living in America as an agent for raw material and munitions of war, there follows a commentary on the Carranza régime in Mexico and the problem of mineral and mining rights (Steffens, pp. 730-732). Next comes an incident related by Lamont (' Tommy Baymont ') to Steffens to indicate the limits of power of the Morgan firm when confronted by the gangster activities of ' Diamond Jim ' Brady (Steffens, p. 590). The following passage seems to deal with

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a meeting of the Morgan partners, but the key is missing. In Canto XVIII we can make out that Zenos Metevsky = Sir Basil Zaharoff, that Biers = Sir Hiram Maxim, and that Humbers = Vickers. The difficulties increase when contemporary identification is impossible. In Canto XV it appears that the escape from the Inferno is made by the aid of Plotinus and by directing the Medusa head at the quagmire so that a petrified path is formed. But this may be an entirely wrong interpretation and, in any case, the significance of Medusa is inexplicable. In Canto XXVII it appears that ' tovarisch,' the proletarian, lifted from the earth by the Graces and the arts, goes through cycles of revolution and counter-revolution but is merely able to unbuild, never to build as his rulers have done, or even to distinguish good fortune from bad. But there is nothing in the rest of the Cantos to determine whether such an interpretation is valid or false. It is possible to show that certain Cantos deal with certain themes, but it is extremely difficult to adduce reasons why such themes have been chosen or why they appear at precisely such and such points in the Cantos.

The most dogmatic and the most misguided attempt to provide the Cantos with a pattern comes from Zukofsky in *The Criterion* for April 1931. After approving the sufficiency of the ' timeless ' method, he finds a music of word against word, of line against line, of Canto against Canto, and of the Cantos as a whole. The *Hound and Horn* reviewer (Winter 1931) falls, more intelligently, into a similar error. It is true that adjectives and phrases are repeated in the same Canto and in consecutive lines with a different emphasis or with differing metrical weight (see Canto XVII), that phrases and quotations (' voce tinnula ;' ' Grow with the pines of Isé ') are repeated from Canto to Canto, and that there is a continuity of personæ (Sigismundo Malatesta, Ignez de Castro, lo Sordels, Borso). Pound, too, rightly revolts against the confusion of method resulting from vague attempts to elaborate Baudelaire's doctrine of ' correspondances.' A confusion of the perceptions of the senses, an expression of one sense in terms of another, is usually shoddy thinking and shoddy expression. The product in unskilled hands is not Rimbaud's ' long, immense et raisonné *dérèglement* de *tous les sens*,'[1] but an unreasonable and muddled disequilibrium.

[1]Letter to P. Dalmeny, 15th May, 1871.

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Isolation of the ' image ' is, however, not a satisfactory reply. Pound falls into the error of Corbière and Gérard de Nerval and gives the image an isolated value. That is, in his attempts to produce what his disciples call effects of counterpoint, harmony, resolution of cadence, he often leaves his images suspended. Only a very superficial understanding of musical theory (and from Pound's own writings on the subject he seems to have a very fragmentary acquaintance with it) could lead one to believe that effects even faintly analogous to fugal writing (try to conceive of a verbal stretto)[1] can be achieved in poetry. Verbal music has no determinable progressions of tone, no possibility of different notes sounding simultaneously, and therefore to talk of resolution and chord sequence is to be guilty of extrapolation. It is only in rhythm divorced from tonal progressions that any analogy can be drawn. I also take leave to doubt that Pound, in writing these thirty Cantos, has provided for and anticipated the music of those that will follow. Therefore, the defence of the Cantos made by Zukofsky on grounds of a resolved music is meaningless.

What, then, is the pattern of the Cantos? I do not ask for a Miltonic system expounded from point to point, but a recognizable order. Pound has written magnificently about order in Canto XIII, but he is often at fault in that he attempts to transcribe ' things ' (the image, the object) instead of integrating his reactions. Valéry, a poet excessively pre-occupied with technique, insists on the creative mind fixing ' points de repère tellement placés que la vie particulière et cette vie généralisée qu'il s'est trouvée se composent.' Valéry, at his best, expresses the order of emotion. A poem may hinge on so negative an apprehension as

> Tête complète et parfait diadème,
> Je suis en toi le secret changement—

but the poem is centripetal to it and ordered by it. Even the *Anabase* of Perse, which relies on sequence of imagery, is ordered by concepts of migration, conquest and foundation.

The value of the Cantos is, finally, the success of the parts.

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[1] I am aware of Joyce's attempt on p. 278 of *Ulysses*, and of Stuart Gilbert's analysis.

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Only in *Mauberley*, of the works of Pound, did external events (actually the war) crystallize out into a logical structure suitable for a poem of some length, but the condition of mind which produced *Mauberley* did not last. The references to the war in Canto XVI are vague and diffused, though personalized, compared with *Mauberley*, but there are passages in the Cantos worthy to stand with that great poem. To indicate some of them is the most convincing defence of the Cantos that can be made.

The early date of the first seven Cantos is often overlooked. If it is borne in mind that this passage was written at something like the same time as *Gerontion*, the debt to Pound which Eliot has frequently acknowledged becomes obvious:

> Life to make mock of motion:
> For the husks, before me, move,
> The words rattle: shells given out by shells.
> The live man, out of lands and prisons,
> shakes the dry pods,
> Probes for old wills and friendships, and the big locust-casques
> Bend to the tawdry table,
> Lift up their spoons to mouths, put forks in cutlets,
> And make sound like the sound of voices.
>
> (Canto VII)

A passage from Canto XV should be enough to show that Pound did not leave with *Mauberley* his power of assessing the contemporary situation:

> and the laudatores temporis acti
> claiming that the sh-t used to be blacker and richer
> and the fabians crying for the petrification of putrefaction,
> for a new dung-flow cut in lozenges,
> the conservatives chatting,
> distinguished by gaiters of slum-flesh,
> and the back-scratchers in a great circle,
> complaining of insufficient attention.

The first paragraph of Canto XVI, particularly those lines describing Blake, are the nearest approach to Dante in English, but the most

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sustained achievement of the Cantos is perhaps the account of the voyagers and the ' lotophagoi of the suave nails ' in Canto XX. The whole of the superb passage deserves close study, but these lines will indicate its quality:

' Their names are not written in bronze
' Nor their rowing sticks set with Elpenor's ;
' Nor have they mound by sea-bord.
' That saw never the olives under Spartha
' With the leaves green and then not green,
' The click of light in their branches ;
' That saw not the bronze hall nor the ingle
' Nor lay there with the queen's waiting maids,
' Nor had they Circe to couch-mate, Circe Titania,
' Nor had they meats of Kalüpso
' Or her silk skirts brushing their thighs.
' Give ! What were they given?
Ear-wax.
' Poison and ear-wax,
and a salt grave by the bull-field,
' *neson amumona*, their heads like sea crows in the foam,
' Black splotches, sea-weed under lightning ;
' Canned beef of Apollo, ten cans for a boat load.'

Eliot has already remarked on the importance of the Cantos as a handbook of modern versification and it would be ungracious if I did not admit that I owe more to Pound than to any other living poet. But the Cantos are as liable to be a snare as an aid, since young men of exotic reading and precious tastes may be expected to produce pastiches of the Cantos for years to come. Such works will merely be rag-bags for odds and ends of erudition and pseudo-science. It is Pound's triumph, perverse though it may be, that, having dispensed with the chief accessories of the poet in this age, he has yet written in the Cantos some of the most memorable verse of our time.

RONALD BOTTRALL.

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MILTON'S VERSE

MILTON'S dislodgment, in the past decade, after his two centuries of predominance, was effected with remarkably little fuss. The irresistible argument was, of course, Mr. Eliot's creative achievement ; it gave his few critical asides—potent, it is true, by context—their finality, and made it unnecessary to elaborate a case. Mr. Middleton Murry also, it should be remembered, came out against Milton at much the same time—just after the war. His *Problem of Style* contains an acute page or two comparing Milton with Shakespeare, and there was a review of Bridges' *Milton's Prosody* in *The Athenæum* that one would like to see reprinted along with a good deal more of Mr. Murry's weekly journalism of that time. But the case remained unelaborated, and now that Mr. Eliot has become academically respectable those who refer to it show commonly that they cannot understand it. And when a writer of Mr. Allen Tate's repute as critic, poet and intellectual leader, telling us that Milton should be ' made ' to ' influence poetry once more,' shows that he too doesn't understand, then one may overcome, perhaps, one's shyness of saying the obvious.

Mr. Tate thinks that if we don't like Milton it is because of a prejudice against myth and fable and a preference for the fragmentary : ' When we read poetry we bring to it the pseudo-scientific habit of mind ; we are used to joining things up in vague disconnected processes in terms that are abstract and thin, and so our sensuous enjoyment is confined to the immediate field of sensation. We are bewildered, helpless, confronted with one of those immensely remote, highly sensuous and perfectly make-believe worlds that rise above our scattered notions of process.' (*The New Republic*, Oct. 21, 1931)

Not everyone will find this impressive. If we are affected by the pseudo-scientific habit of mind to that degree, some would suggest, we probably cannot read poetry at all. But if we can and do read poetry, then our objection to Milton, it must be insisted, is that we dislike his verse and believe that in such verse no ' highly sensuous and perfectly make-believe world ' could be

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evoked. Even in the first two books of *Paradise Lost*, where the myth has vigorous life and one can admire the magnificent invention that Milton's verse is, we feel, after a few hundred lines, our sense of dissatisfaction growing into something stronger. In the end we find ourselves protesting—protesting against the routine gesture, the heavy fall, of the verse, flinching from the foreseen thud that comes so inevitably, and, at last, irresistibly: for reading *Paradise Lost* is a matter of resisting, of standing up against, the verse-movement, of subduing it into something tolerably like sensitiveness, and in the end our resistance is worn down ; we surrender at last to the inescapable monotony of the ritual. Monotony: the variety attributed to Milton's Grand Style in the orthodox account can be discoursed on and illustrated at great length, but the stress could be left on ' variety,' after an honest interrogation of experience, only by the classically trained.

Here, if this were a lecture, would come illustrative reading-out—say of the famous opening to Book III. As it is, the point seems best enforcible (though it should be obvious at once to anyone capable of being convinced at all) by turning to one of the exceptionally good passages—for everyone will agree at any rate that there are places where the verse glows with an unusual life. One of these, it will again be agreed, is the Mulciber passage at the end of Book I:

> The hasty multitude
> Admiring enter'd, and the work some praise
> And some the Architect: his hand was known
> In Heav'n by many a Towred structure high,
> Where Scepter'd Angels held thir residence,
> And sat as Princes, whom the supreme King
> Exalted to such power, and gave to rule,
> Each in his Hierarchie, the Orders bright.
> Nor was his name unheard or unador'd
> In ancient *Greece* ; and in *Ausonian* land
> Men called him *Mulciber* ; and how he fell
> From Heav'n, they fabl'd, thrown by angry *Jove*
> Sheer o're the Chrystal Battlements: from Morn
> To Noon he fell, from Noon to dewy Eve,
> A Summers day ; and with the setting Sun

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Dropt from the Zenith like a falling Star,
On Lemnos th' *Ægæan* Ile: thus they relate,
Erring . . .

The opening exhibits the usual heavy rhythmic pattern, the hieratic stylization, the swaying ritual movement back and forth, the steep cadences. Italics will serve to suggest how, when the reader's resistance has weakened, he is brought inevitably down with the foreseen thud in the foreseen place:

The hasty multitude
Ad*mir*ing enter'd, and the wórk some praise
And *some* the Architect: his hánd was known
In Héav'n by many a Tówred structure high
Where Scépter'd Angels held thir résidence,
And *sat* as Princes . . .

But from ' Nor was his name unheard ' onwards the effect changes. One no longer feels oneself carried along, resigned or protesting, by an automatic ritual, responding automatically with bodily gestures—swayed head and lifted shoulders—to the commanding emphasis: the verse seems suddenly to have come to life. Yet the pattern remains the same; there are the same heavy stresses, the same rhythmic gestures and the same cadences, and if one thought a graph of the verse-movement worth drawing it would not show the difference. The change of feeling cannot at first be related to any point of form; it comes in with ' ancient *Greece* ' and ' *Ausonian* land,' and seems to be immediately due to the evocation of that serene, clear, ideally remote classical world so potent upon Milton's sensibility. But what is most important to note is that the heavy stresses, the characteristic cadences, turns and returns of the verse, have here a peculiar expressive felicity. What would elsewhere have been the routine thump of ' Sheer ' and ' Dropt ' is here, in either case, obviously functional, and the other rhythmic features of the verse are correspondingly appropriate. The stress given by the end-position to the first ' fell,' with the accompanying pause, in what looks like a common limply pompous Miltonicism—

and how he fell
From Heav'n they fabl'd, thrown . . .

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—is here uncommonly right ; the heavy ' thrown ' is right, and so are the following rise and fall, the slopes and curves, of the verse.

There is no need to particularize further. This much room has been given to the fairly obvious merely by way of insisting that the usual pattern of Milton's verse has here an unusual expressive function—becomes, indeed, something else. If anyone should question the unusualness, the doubt would be soon settled by a little exploration. And to admit the unusualness is to admit that commonly the pattern, the stylized gesture and movement, has no particular expressive work to do, but functions by rote, of its own momentum, in the manner of a ritual.

Milton has difficult places to cross, runs the orthodox eulogy, but his style always carries him through. The sense that Milton's style is of that kind, the dissatisfied sense of a certain hollowness, would by most readers who share it be first of all referred to a characteristic not yet specified—that which evoked from Mr. Eliot the damaging word ' magniloquence.' To say that Milton's verse is magniloquent is to say that it is not doing as much as its impressive pomp and volume seem to be asserting ; that mere orotundity is a disproportionate part of the whole effect ; and that it demands more deference than it merits. It is to call attention to a lack of something in the stuff of the verse, to a certain sensuous poverty.

This poverty is best established by contrast, and tactical considerations suggest taking the example from Milton himself:

> Wherefore did Nature powre her bounties forth,
> With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
> Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
> Thronging the Seas with spawn innumerable,
> But all to please, and sate the curious taste?
> And set to work millions of spinning Worms,
> That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk
> To deck her Sons, and that no corner might
> Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loyns
> She hutch't th'all-worshipt ore, and precious gems
> To store her children with ; if all the world
> Should in a pet of temperance feed on Pulse,
> Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but Freize,

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Th'all-giver would be unthank't, would be unprais'd,
Not half his riches known, and yet despis'd,
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a Penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Natures bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangl'd with her waste fertility ;
Th'earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark't with plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their Lords,
The Sea o'refraught would swell, and th'unsought diamonds
Would so emblaze the forhead of the Deep,
And so bestudd with Stars, that they below
Would grow inur'd to light, and com at last
To graze upon the Sun with shameless brows.

This is very unlike anything in *Paradise Lost* (indeed, it is not very like most of *Comus*). If one could forget where one had read it, and were faced with assigning it to its author, one would not soon fix with conviction on any dramatist. And yet it is too like dramatic verse to suggest Milton. It shows, in fact, the momentary predominance in Milton of Shakespeare. It may look less mature, less developed, than the verse of *Paradise Lost* ; it is, as a matter of fact, richer, subtler and more sensitive than anything in *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained* or *Samson Agonistes*.

Its comparative sensuous richness, which is pervasive, lends itself fairly readily to analysis at various points ; for instance:

And set to work millions of spinning Worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk . . .

The Shakespearian life of this is to be explained largely by the swift diversity of associations that are run together. The impression of the swarming worms is telescoped with that of the ordered industry of the workshop, and a further vividness results from the contrasting ' green,' with its suggestion of leafy tranquillity. ' Smooth-hair'd ' plays off against the energy of the verse the tactual luxury of stroking human hair or the living coat of an animal. The texture of actual sounds, the run of vowels and

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consonants, with the variety of action and effort, rich in subtle analogical suggestion, demanded in pronouncing them, plays an essential part, though this is not to be analysed in abstraction from the meaning. The total effect is as if words as words withdrew themselves from the focus of our attention and we were directly aware of a tissue of feelings and perceptions.

No such effect is possible in the verse of *Paradise Lost*, where the use of the medium, the poet's relation to his words, is completely different. This, for instance, is from the description, in Book VI, of the Garden of Eden, which, most admirers of Milton will agree, exemplifies sensuous richness if that is to be found in *Paradise Lost*:

> And now divided into four main Streams,
> Runs divers, wandring many a famous Realme
> And Country whereof here needs no account,
> But rather to tell how, if Art could tell,
> How from that Sapphire Fount the crisped Brooks,
> Rowling on Orient Pearl and sands of Gold,
> With mazie error under pendant shades
> Ran Nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
> Flours worthy of Paradise which not nice Art
> In Beds and curious Knots, but Nature boon
> Powrd forth profuse on Hill and Dale and Plaine,
> Both where the morning Sun first warmly smote
> The open field, and where the unpierc't shade
> Imbround the noontide Bowrs: Thus was this place,
> A happy rural seat of various view:
> Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gumms and Balme,
> Others whose fruit burnisht with Golden Rinde
> Hung amiable, *Hesperian* Fables true,
> If true, here onely, and of delicious taste . . .

It should be plain at once that the difference was not exaggerated. As the laboured, pedantic artifice of the diction suggests, Milton seems here to be focussing rather upon words than upon perceptions, sensations or things. 'Sapphire,' 'Orient Pearl,' 'sands of Gold,' 'odorous Gumms and Balme,' and so on, convey no doubt a vague sense of opulence, but this is not what we mean

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by ' sensuous richness.' The loose judgment that it is a verbal opulence has a plain enough meaning if we look for contrast at the ' bestudd with Stars ' of Comus's speech ; there we feel (the alliteration is of a different kind from that of the Grand Style) the solid lumps of gold studding the ' forhead of the Deep.' In the description of Eden, a little before the passage quoted, we have:

> And all amid them stood the Tree of Life,
> High eminent, blooming Ambrosial Fruit
> Of vegetable Gold . . .

It would be of no use to try and argue with anyone who contended that ' vegetable Gold ' exemplified the same kind of fusion as ' green shops.'

It needs no unusual sensitiveness to language to perceive that, in this Grand Style, the medium calls pervasively for a kind of attention, compels an attitude towards itself, that is incompatible with sharp, concrete realization ; just as it would seem to be, in the mind of the poet, incompatible with an interest in sensuous particularity. He exhibits a feeling *for* words rather than a capacity for feeling *through* words ; we are often, in reading him, moved to comment that he is ' external ' or that he ' works from the outside.' The Grand Style, at its best, compels us to recognize it as an impressive stylization, but it functions very readily, and even impressively, at low tension, and its tendency is betrayed, even in a show piece like the description of Eden, by such offences as:

> Thus was this place,
> A happy rural seat of various view:
> Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gumms and Balme,
> Others whose fruit burnisht with Golden Rinde
> Hung amiable, *Hesperian* Fables true,
> If true, here onely, and of delicious taste . . .

—If the Eighteenth Century thought that poetry was something that could be applied from the outside, it found the precedent as well as the apparatus in Milton.

The extreme and consistent remoteness of Milton's medium from any English that was ever spoken is an immediately relevant

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consideration. It became, of course, habitual to him ; but habituation could not sensitize a medium so cut off from speech—speech that belongs to the emotional and sensory texture of actual living and is in resonance with the nervous system ; it could only confirm an impoverishment of sensibility. In any case, the Grand Style barred Milton from essential expressive resources of English that he had once commanded. Comus, in the passage quoted, imagining the consequences of the Lady's doctrine, says that Nature

> would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
> And strangl'd with her waste fertility ;
> Th'earth cumber'd and the wing'd air dark't with plumes,
> The herds would over-multitude their Lords,
> The Sea o'refraught would swell . . .

To cut the passage short here is to lame it, for the effect of Nature's being strangled with her waste fertility is partly conveyed by the ejaculatory piling-up of clauses, as the reader, by turning back, can verify. But one way in which the verse acts the meaning—not merely says but does—is fairly represented in the line,

> Th'earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark't with plumes,

where the crowding of stressed words, the consonantal clusters and the clogged movement have a function that needs no analysis. This kind of action in the verse, together with the attendant effects of movement and intonation in the whole passage, would be quite impossible in the Grand Style: the tyrannical stylization forbids. But then, the mind that invented Milton's Grand Style had renounced the English language, and with that, inevitably, Milton being an Englishman, a great deal else.

'Milton wrote Latin as readily as he did English.' And: 'Critics sometimes forget that before the *Nativity Ode* Milton wrote more Latin than English, and one may suggest that the best of the Latin is at least as good as the best of the English.' At any rate, one can believe that, after a decade of Latin polemic, Latin idiom came very naturally to him, and was associated with some of his strongest, if not necessarily most interesting, habits of feeling. But however admirable his Latin may be judged to be, to Latinize in English is quite another matter, and it is a

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testimony to the effect of the 'fortifying curriculum' that the price of Milton's Latinizing should have been so little recognized.

'This charm of the exceptional and the irregular in diction,' writes Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith in his extremely valuable essay on English Idioms (*Words and Idioms*, p. 267), 'accounts for the fact that we can enjoy the use of idiom even in a dead language which we do not know very well; it also explains the subtlety of effect which Milton achieved by transfusing Greek or Latin constructions into his English verse.' But Milton's transfusing is regular and unremitting, and involves, not pleasant occasional surprises, but a consistent rejection of English idiom, as the passage quoted from Book IV sufficiently shows. So complete, and so mechanically habitual, is Milton's departure from the English order, structure and accentuation that he often produces passages that have to be read through several times before one can see how they go, though the Miltonic mind has nothing to offer that could justify obscurity—no obscurity was intended: it is merely that Milton has forgotten the English language. There is, however, a much more important point to be made: it is that, cultivating so complete and systematic a callousness to the intrinsic nature of English, Milton forfeits all possibility of subtle or delicate life in his verse.

It should be plain, for instance, that subtlety of movement in English verse depends upon the play of the natural sense movement and intonation against the verse structure, and that 'natural,' here, involves a reference, more or less direct, to idiomatic speech. The development in Shakespeare can be studied as a more and more complex and subtle play of speech movement and intonation against the verse. There is growing complexity of imagery and thought too, of course, but it is not to this mainly that one would refer in analysing the difference between a characteristic passage of *Othello* and Romeo's dying lament: the difference is very largely a matter of subtle tensions within, pressures upon, the still smooth curves of the still 'regular' verse of *Othello*. No such play is possible in a medium in which the life of idiom, the pressure of speech, is as completely absent as in Milton's Grand Style. That is why even in the most lively books of *Paradise Lost* the verse, brilliant as it is, has to the ear that appreciates Shakespeare a wearying deadness about it. That skill we are told of, the skill

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with which Milton varies the beat without losing touch with the underlying norm, slides the cæsura backwards and forwards, and so on, is certainly there. But the kind of appreciation this skill demands is that which one gives—if one is a classic—to a piece of Latin (we find writers on Milton ' appreciating ' his Latin verse in the same tone and spirit as they do his English).

' An appreciation of Milton is the last reward of consummated scholarship.' Qualified as Mark Pattison prescribes, one may, with Raleigh, find that Milton's style is ' all substance and weight,' that he is almost too packed to be read aloud, and go on to acclaim the ' top of his skill ' in the choruses of *Samson Agonistes*. But the ear trained on Shakespeare will believe that it would lose little at the first hearing of a moderately well-declaimed passage, and that *Samson Agonistes* read aloud would be hardly tolerable, because of its desolating exposure of utter loss—loss in the poet of all feeling for his native English. The rhythmic deadness, the mechanical externality with which the movement is varied, is the more pitifully evident because of the personal urgency of the theme and the austerity: there is no magniloquence here. To arrive here, of course, took genius, and the consummation can be analytically admired. But then, there have been critics of repute who found rhythmic subtlety in *Phœbus with Admetus* and *Love in the Valley*.

Up to this point the stress has fallen upon Milton's Latinizing. To leave it there would be to suggest an inadequate view of his significance. His influence is seen in Tennyson as well as in Thomson, and to say that he groups with Tennyson and Spenser in contrast to Shakespeare and Donne is to say something more important about him than that he Latinized. The force of associating him with Spenser is not that he was himself ' sage and serious ' ; and in contrasting him with Donne one is not, as seems also commonly to be thought, lamenting that he chose not to become a Metaphysical. The qualities of Donne that invite the opposition are what is shown in this:

> On a huge hill,
> Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
> Reach her, about must, and about must goe ;
> And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so ;
> Yet strive so, that before age, deaths twilight,
> Thy Soule rest, for none can worke in that night.

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This is the Shakespearian use of English ; one might say that it is the English use—the use, in the essential spirit of the language, of its characteristic resources. The words seem to do what they say ; a very obvious example of what, in more or less subtle forms, is pervasive being given in the image of reaching that the reader has to enact when he passes from the second to the third line. But a comparison will save analysis:

> For so to interpose a little ease,
> Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
> Ay me ! Whilst thee the shores, and sounding Seas
> Wash far away, where ere thy bones are hurld,
> Whether beyond the stormy *Hebrides*,
> Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
> Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world . . .

The contrast is sharp ; the use of the medium, the attitude towards it in both writer and reader, is as different as possible. Though the words are doing so much less work than in Donne, they seem to value themselves more highly—they seem, comparatively, to be occupied with valuing themselves rather than with doing anything. This last clause would have to be saved for Tennyson if it were a question of distinguishing fairly between Milton and him, but, faced with the passage from Donne, Milton and Tennyson go together. Tennyson descends from Spenser by way of Milton and Keats, and it was not for nothing that Milton, to the puzzlement of some critics, named Spenser as his ' original ' : the mention of Tennyson gives the statement (however intended) an obvious significance.

The consummate art of *Lycidas*, personal as it is, exhibits a use of language in the spirit of Spenser—incantatory, remote from speech. Certain feelings are expressed, but there is no pressure behind the words ; what predominates in the handling of them is not the tension of something precise to be defined and fixed, but a concern for mellifluousness—for liquid sequences and a pleasing opening and closing of the vowels. This is the bent revealed in the early work ; the Shakespearean passage in *Comus* is exceptional. Milton, that is, some-one will observe of the comparison, is trying to do something quite other than Donne ; his bent is quite different. Exactly: the point is to be clear which way it tends.

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The most admired things in *Comus*—it is significant—are the songs.

> Sweet Echo, sweetest Nymph . . .

Quite plainly, the intention here is not merely to flatter the singing voice and suit the air, but to produce in words effects analogous to those of music, and the exquisite achievement has been sufficiently praised. The undertaking was congenial to Milton. Already he had shown his capacity for a weightier kind of music, a more impressive and less delicate instrument:

> Blest pair of *Sirens*, pledges of Heav'ns joy,
> Sphear-born harmonious Sisters, Voice, and Vers,
> Wed your divine sounds, and mixt power employ
> Dead things with inbreath'd sense able to pierce,
> And . . .

We remember the Tennysonian felicity: 'God-gifted organ voice.' *At a Solemn Musick*, though coming from not long after 1630, anticipates unmistakably the 'melodious noise' of *Paradise Lost*, and suggests a further account of that sustained impressiveness, that booming swell, which becomes so intolerable.

This, then, and not any incapacity to be interested in myth, is why we find Milton unexhilarating. The myth of *Paradise Lost*, indeed, suffers from deficiencies related to those of the verse. 'Milton's celestial and infernal regions are large but insufficiently furnished apartments filled by heavy conversation,' remarks Mr. Eliot, and suggests that the divorce from Rome, following the earlier breach with the Teutonic past, may have something to do with this mythological thinness. But it is enough to point to the limitations in range and depth of Milton's interests, their patent inadequacy to inform a 'sense of myth, of fable, of ordered wholes in experience.' His strength is of the kind that we indicate when, distinguishing between intelligence and character, we lay the stress on the latter; it is a strength, that is, involving sad disabilities. He has 'character,' moral grandeur, moral force; but he is, for the purposes of his undertaking, disastrously single-minded and simple-minded. He reveals everywhere a dominating sense of

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righteousness and a complete incapacity to question or explore its significance and conditions. This defect of intelligence is a defect of imagination. He offers as ultimate for our worship mere brute assertive will, though he condemns it unwittingly by his argument and by glimpses of his own finer human standard. His volume of moral passion owes its strength too much to innocence—a guileless unawareness of the subtleties of egotism—to be an apt agent for projecting an ' ordered whole of experience.' It involves, too, a great poverty of interest. After the first two books, magnificent in their simple force (party politics in the Grand Style Milton can compass), *Paradise Lost,* though there are intervals of relief, becomes dull and empty: ' all,' as Raleigh says, ' is power, vagueness and grandeur.' Milton's inadequacy to myth, in fact, is so inescapable, and so much is conceded in sanctioned comment, that the routine eulogy of his ' architectonic ' power is plainly a matter of mere inert convention.

But even if the realized effect were much less remote than it actually is from the abstract design, even if the life and interest were much better distributed, the orthodox praise of Milton's architectonics would still be questionable in its implications. It would still be most commonly found to harbour the incomprehensions betrayed by Mr. Allen Tate:

' In his time (as in ours) there was a good deal to be said for the Spenserian school against the technical breakdown to which the Jacobean dramatists had ridden English verse. Webster is a great moment in English style, but the drama was falling off, and blank verse had to survive in a non-dramatic form, which required a more rigid treatment than the stage could offer it. In substance, it needed stiffer and less sensitive perceptions, a more artificial grasp of sensation, to offset the supersensitive awareness of the school of Shakespeare, a versification less imitative of the flow of sensation and more architectural. What poetry needed, Milton was able to give. It was Arnold who, in the 1853 preface to his own poems, remarked that the sensational imagery of the Shakespearian tradition had not been without its baleful effect on poetry down to Keats: one may imitate a passage in Shakespeare without penetrating to the mind that wrote it, but to imitate Milton one must be Milton ; one must have all of Milton's resources in myth

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behind the impulse: it is the myth, ingrained in his very being, that makes the style.'

If that is so, the style, as we have seen, condemns the myth. Behind the whole muddled passage, of course, and not far behind, is the old distinction (see, for instance, Raleigh) between the 'Classical style' and the 'Romantic'—the 'Romantic' including Shelley (and, one presumes, Swinburne) along with Shakespeare. It is enough here to say that the inability to read Shakespeare revealed in such a passage and such a distinction throws the most damaging suspicion upon the term 'architectural.' Mr. Tate clearly implies that because Shakespeare exhibits 'more sensitive perceptions,' and offers a 'versification more imitative of the flow of sensation,' he is therefore indifferent to total effect and dissipates the attention by focussing, and asking us to focus, on the immediate at the expense of the whole. As a matter of fact, any one of the great tragedies is an incomparably better whole than *Paradise Lost*; so finely and subtly organised that architectural analogies seem inappropriate (a good deal of *Paradise Lost* strikes one as being almost as mechanical as brick-laying). The analysis of a Shakespeare passage showing that 'supersensitive awareness' leads one into the essential structure of the whole organism: Shakespeare's marvellous faculty of intense local realization is a faculty of realizing the whole locally.

A Shakespeare play, says Professor Wilson Knight, may be considered as 'an expanded metaphor,' and the phrase suggests with great felicity this almost inconceivably close and delicate organic wholeness. The belief that 'architectural' qualities like Milton's represent a higher kind of unity goes with the kind of intellectual bent that produced Humanism—that takes satisfaction in inertly orthodox generalities, and is impressed by invocations of Order from minds that have no glimmer of intelligence about contemporary literature and could not safely risk even elementary particular appreciation. Mr. Allen Tate thinks that 'there is no abler critic in English than Mr. Montgomery Belgion' (*The New Republic*, March 16, 1932).

F. R. LEAVIS.

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SCRUTINY OF EXAMINATIONS

WE have nothing to offer in solution of the problems discussed in educational journals—'Should the papers be easy and the marking hard, or *vice-versa*?' or 'Should the School Certificate be separated from Matriculation?' Our case is more fundamental. We wish to make it unequivocally plain that, under the essential conditions of the wholesale public examination, no radical reform is possible. That is our excuse for rehandling issues that have had so much public attention of late. There has to be some repetition of the familiar in order to make the stress that was not made, drive home the point that was delicately not driven home and enforce beyond cavil the unqualified general conclusion.

In what follows attention will be directed mainly upon the School Certificate Examination, particularly upon the papers in English and the 'humane' subjects; but illustrative material will also be drawn from other subjects of the examination curriculum, and it should be obvious that the case presented has implications both lower and higher in the scale. Those who accept it will hardly believe that there is any valid reason for the continued existence of the Junior Locals, or that university examinations are beyond reproach.

* * * * *

The official view of External Examinations is that 'under proper conditions they are a necessary and a valuable part of the educational machinery of a good school system.' 'Proper conditions' is the phrase that requires attention (and 'educational machinery' is significant), for the first point to be noticed is that examinations are inevitably (whether 'properly' or not) conditioned by the vast numbers of those who, each year, sit for one or other of the School Certificates. In 1930 the total for England and Wales was 63,000 candidates; of these the Northern Universities Joint Matriculation Board had over 17,000, two other Boards had over 10,000 each, and three others over 5,000, In these six

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examinations practically all candidates took English, and a large majority took French, History and Geography.[1] For each of these subjects in each examination, therefore, sometimes seven or eight, sometimes twenty or more examiners were necessary (The *Report*, p. 39, gives 40 as a maximum). One has only to remember that in these subjects at any rate individual judgments on the same performance are notoriously variable, in order to realize that the main problem for the chief examiners is the standardization of the marking. Recourse to the system of ' markable points ' provides the only solution. As the *Report* observes (p. 63), ' Already in every well organized examination it is found necessary for the purposes of standardization to produce an agreed scheme of marking for each question, which involves setting out the markable points and the mark allocation to each.'

This essential device for standardization is further enforced by the needs of the individual examiner. Faced with some hundreds of scripts, marking against time (the failure of one cog throws the whole machine out of gear) he is clearly in no position to assess each paper on its merits. He has ' to visualize mentally an oppressive number of topics, when working at high pressure.' He too finds his salvation in a series of skeleton answers consisting of ' the markable points to be looked for.' With this propped up before him (after the first hundred he knows it by heart), his pencil can travel at the requisite speed and his hourly average can be maintained.

' A detailed scheme of marking which takes account of the several markable points in each question and of common errors in the answers is generally essential ' (*Report*, p. 40). Even if we assume, for the moment, that all examiners are intelligent and hard-working, anxious to give value for money, it is plain that intelligence is not an indispensable qualification for marking scripts, that it has in fact no scope. All that is required is the ability to apply a rigid code. The problem of examination resolves itself into a problem of mechanics. The only markable points which are both

[1]See pp. 19 and 23 of *The School Certificate Examination : Being the Report of the Panel of Investigators Appointed . . . to Enquire into the School Certificate Examinations* (H.M. Stationery Office, 1932. 2/6d.).

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recognizable at a glance and sufficiently objective to ensure uniformity amongst a panel of examiners are *facts and standardized opinions*. The effect of this in determining the type of paper set and, therefore, in determining the practice of the schools, will be dealt with later—it should not indeed require much demonstration. It is not because clause analysis is a useful exercise that it forms a regular question in the matriculation papers of at least one examining body. The burden of many letters is summarized by the schoolmaster who writes: 'The School Certificate examination encourages the mass production of a second-rate product. It serves as a memory test in many subjects—particularly English—least suited to such treatment . . . Unless the sole object of education is to teach industry and unintelligent memorizing, the School Certificate examination is a failure.'

There are at any rate few to applaud the unremitting application to facts and standardized opinions which (since answers must gear with the markable points) the examination machinery forces upon the schools; that is why there is so much uneasy discussion of 'reform.' But the factors by which the present system is conditioned ensure that it will continue essentially unchanged. In examinations involving only a small number of candidates (university scholarship examinations for example) it is possible to devise and apply a test which may not only be expected to provide some index of comparative intelligence and ability but which will also (less uncertainly) ensure that candidates who have the examination in view will read with some discrimination and cultivate whatever critical powers they may possess (and the worst boy in a lower fifth form possesses some potential ability of this kind). In English, for example, a candidate may be asked to make a critical comparison of a passage from *The Cenci* with its Shakespearian original (both being printed on the paper), or to comment upon the reasons given by the Arden editor for his unfortunate emendation of Macbeth's 'dusty death.' These are offered not as possessing any special excellence, but merely as examples of one kind of question for which cramming is impossible. Proposals for reform from intelligent schoolmasters usually point in this direction. Several correspondents would like the School Certificate papers to follow the lines of the papers set in university scholarship examinations, adjusted of course to the level of boys and girls of sixteen. One suggests that for certain

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papers a prescribed book should be taken into the examination room on which questions should be set to test the candidates' critical ability and their powers of handling material. So far as English is concerned many put their faith in the abolition of set books and the substitution of a general literature paper such as is already included in the syllabus of certain boards. They recognize that the mere substitution cannot defeat the crammer since the questions are bound to follow a fairly beaten track, but they feel—as an advocate of the general literature paper remarked in the *Times Educational Supplement* some years ago—that ' Surely it is not impossible to get together a body of examiners who . . . can be trusted to devise questions of a kind that will be a real test of literary appreciation and will reduce to a minimum the likelihood of cramming.'[1] The answer to this, as to the other proposals, is conclusive, and, one would have thought, sufficiently obvious. One has only to imagine a panel of examiners faced not with twenty five or fifty but with several thousand answers to the specimen questions given above. How is the marking to be standardized (and the essential aim is to supply hall-marks of certified value)? How far can one examiner trust the other nine (or thirty nine)? The same objections apply to parallel suggestions for making the examination a real test of intelligence and useful reading in other subjects besides English. In examinations involving 5,000 . . . 10,000 . . . 17,000 candidates only facts and standardized opinions *can* be examined. While the School Certificate, or anything proposing the same function, continues, so long shall we continue ' to hale and drag our choicest and hopefullest wits to that asinine feast of sowthistles and brambles which is commonly set before them.'

A glance at statistics is sufficient to dispose of all proposals for alleviation. Consider, for example the complete impracticability of the suggestion for ' modifying the externality of the examination ' contained in an English Association pamphlet (No. 37): ' Each school should draw up for itself a list of texts to be studied ; it should determine for itself the lines on which its syllabus should be treated, and it should submit to the examining body a specimen examination paper indicating the method followed in the teaching. The test questions should be based on the works

[1] *Examinations and Literature, T.E.S.*, August 13, 1927.

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intensively studied, and also on books read either at school or privately.'[1] It does not require a chief examiner to point out the complete confusion in the marking of the 17,000 that would result. The Report, it is true, favours the inclusion of alternative syllabuses put forward by individual schools (p. 43)—' Nor is it sufficient for the teacher to urge that he would teach on different lines were it not for the examination, unless, indeed, he has tried and failed to bring the syllabus more into accord with the kind of work which he regards as educationally desirable ' (pp. 59-60)[2]—but it seems clear that the alternative syllabuses are not expected to differ from those imposed by the Examining Bodies in anything more fundamental than, say, the extent of an historical ' period ' or the substitution of one set book for another. For a body of intelligent teachers in different subjects to ask for papers really in accord with the kind of work which they regard as ' educationally desirable ' would be the

[1]Quoted from the summary in *Examinations and Literature*. An utopian development of this scheme coming from a university lecturer in education does not, perhaps, require comment: ' The direction in which examinations must be most violently reformed is in defeating the crammer. For a few years broader questions would throw the crammer out of his stride,—but only for a few years . . . The best course would be, in history, geography and English, to ask teachers to submit three " projects," or more, for the year. If these are approved, then the class must do them, and the work must be submitted to the examiners. These must be satisfied that all the children have had a share in the work, and they should question them individually, orally [Two minutes each for the 17,000?], to see if they understand what they have done and its relation to other aspects of the subject. They will also have the teachers' evidence for the ability shown by each child.'

[2]' How far the school view, where it exists, of a particular syllabus or type of paper is likely in any particular case to affect a divergent University or professorial view of the matter, with resulting modifications in the direction desired by the schools, only those can say who have an inner knowledge of the working machinery and actual experience of the standpoint from which the representations of teachers are regarded by the Examining Body concerned.' *Report*, p. 17.

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equivalent of sabotage. The *Report's* insistence that teachers should ' use to the full their opportunities for criticism and suggestion ' reads like the advertisement guaranteeing individual attention from a mass production firm.

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It is extraordinarily difficult to get the obvious and unanswerable point realized: *any system proposing for itself the function of the School Certificate must be anti-educational.* The reformers go on applying their earnest ingenuity to ' reform,' and ' reform ' means, almost invariably, increased ' efficiency.' This is indeed the only kind of reform that can be achieved—and it is only too likely that it will be. Then indeed we shall have reason to talk of the ' machinery of education.'

Yet it is so easy to lose grip on, or to miss entirely, the obvious point in yielding to the constant solicitation to discuss the working problems of the system now in force. There is the question of ' reliability ' for instance. It is common knowledge that good candidates do not always obtain the marks that they are expected to obtain, and that a goat is often found among the sheep. By ' a good candidate,' of course, we may mean either ' an intelligent pupil ' or ' a good examinee '—sometimes the two merge and sometimes they remain more or less distinct—but, disregarding for the moment the more important question of the kind of mind that is tested and encouraged by examinations, let us consider briefly the conclusions reached by Professor Valentine who has been investigating the ' reliability ' of examinations considered as tests of examinable ability.[1] Professor Valentine's method is merely to test one set of examination results by another set of examination results at a later date, but even within these limits his results are disquieting. He proves conclusively, for instance, that there is very little relation between the order of merit in the entrance examination to secondary schools and the order of merit in the School Certificate, and that a very large minority of university entrance scholarships—judging by the results of the final examin-

[1] *The Reliability of Examinations,* University of London Press, 7/6d. Incidentally, some useful conclusions can be drawn from the book concerning the relation of examinable ability to intelligence.

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ation—are misplaced (This is particularly the case when scholarship awards are made by ' bodies other than the universities '—presumably as a result of the Higher Certificate). The implication is that a similar procedure applied to the School Certificate would give similar results. Apart from ' examination luck,' psychological factors such as nervousness, and the causes of unreliability suggested by Professor Valentine (see, *e.g.* pp. 94-95), the element of ' instability' in the marking must be mainly held responsible. Instability due to the incompetence of individual examiners can be, and is to a very large extent, guarded against by an elaborate series of checks.[1] As for the instability due to variations of opinion, we have already considered the precaution that is taken in providing a detailed scheme of markable points. Nevertheless, a large element of instability remains. Even in mathematics American investigators found that ' a hundred experienced teachers gave marks ranging from 28 to 90 to the same answers in an actual examination paper.'[2] And the result of the Durham experiment in English is notorious.[3]

Now all this is very interesting, and (considering the serious economic consequences of success or failure in examinations) it is important that it should be widely known. It points to openings for the most damaging criticism of the existing system, and shows that this system fails miserably to perform the function that is its *raison d'être*. But no one interested in education should spend a

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[1]No examiner would claim that the checks are always successful. The *Report* (p. 101) gives an example: ' One examiner was, on the evidence of a few scripts, judged to be over lenient, whereas in reality he was capricious ; his marks were lowered by a flat rate, and the result was injustice to those candidates whom he had marked severely.' [2]G. Perrie Williams, *The Northamptonshire Composition Scale*. Quoted in *Psychological Aspects of the Examination System*. (See p. 145 below) [3]See *The Marking of School Certificate English* in the *Journal of the A.M.A.*, December 1931, p. 319. All the English scripts from one school were marked independently by seven experienced examiners. The results showed a complete lack of agreement not only as to the class of each candidate—*e.g.* one candidate was failed by three examiners, passed by one, and awarded a pass with credit by three—but also concerning the relative order of the individual performances.

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large proportion of his energy on this kind of criticism. The essential point still is that the function itself is the enemy ; the specific cure of ' unreliability ' is likely to prove worse than the disease. The *Report* remarks (p. 37) that ' Persons whose interest in School Certificate Examinations is greater than their knowledge of the way in which these examinations are conducted now and again take occasion to point out that if the same scripts are independently marked by a number of different examiners there will be wide variations in the marking. Examining Bodies who do not allow their examiners to mark independently are not likely to be greatly moved by this announcement . . . Though it cannot be said that considerable variations in the marking of scripts by the several examiners employed no longer occur in the examinations, great progress has undoubtedly been made in recent years in the standardization of the marking.' It is this ' progress in the standardization of the marking '—the reduction of six years' education to a scheme of markable points—that is alarming.

All the signs, in fact, point towards an even more highly mechanised efficiency. In the *Report*, imperfections in the system are attributed to the fact that the ' minute instructions ' issued in connexion with the marking ' are still not scrupulously carried out by all examiners ' (p. 101). In one case ' serious inaccuracies ' were found ' because the examiner either did not draw up a detailed scheme of marking or, having done so, ignored it ' (p. 117). And a serious argument in favour of easy papers is that they ' can be marked expeditiously ' (p. 55). Professor Valentine is also too easily impressed. He notes as an ' improvement of efficiency ' the ' more detailed standardization of essay marking, etc.' (*Op. cit.* p. 73). There is no need to despair about even the difficulty involved in marking English papers, for these ' *may* be of a high degree of " stability " ' provided only that ' a detailed scheme of marking ' is agreed upon. ' Carefully arranged bases of marking ' is the potent formula (pp. 92-93). ' In the entrance examination in one centre an appreciable improvement was found to follow the introduction of a systematic scheme for the marking of essays and other answers ' (pp. 91 and 165). One swallows the ' other answers ' fairly easily after the 'systematic scheme for the marking of essays.'

Those who are in any doubt as to the schemes approved by Professor Valentine or who think that in any case there is no

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likelihood that they will become general are referred to *The Northamptonshire Composition Scale* by G. Perrie Williams which reports an attempt to ensure greater uniformity in the marking of the compositions in the examination for free places in secondary schools.[1] ' In this experiment fifty compositions, intended to represent all degrees of merit, were marked by 199 teachers. Although they all worked to a specified scheme (allotting given proportions of marks to " Thought," " Structure," and " Mechanics ") the results, says Dr. Perrie Williams, " produce a sense of dismay and a feeling of uneasiness concerning the reliability of any purely subjective examination marking." Composition No. 2, for instance, is ranked in nearly every position on the merit-order list from first to forty-sixth ; it is put in every grade from I to IV ; it carries total marks ranging from 16 per cent. to 100 per cent. . . "Indeed, let us take any one of the fifty compositions, and we see the most complete variance in assessment, not only in marks value, but in *assigned grade*." The remedy adopted was to take the median judgment of the 199 teachers on each composition as being the " correct " judgment, and to rank the fifty compositions in order of merit according to this judgment. These graded compositions now form a permanent scale against which future examiners can match the compositions they are marking and so check their judgment. The preliminary results with this scale show that it will probably have considerable success, as have similar scales in America, in standardizing future examiners' marking.'

The rightness or wrongness, in this particular case, of the ' median judgment ' need not enter the present argument (Although, as Mr. Harding points out, ' It seems clear that fluency in genteel-romantic journalese secured good marks from the majority, whereas individual judges may have discounted or penalised it, and may well have been right '). What is important (and it needs to be brought home to those who are not familiar with examining

[1]This paragraph is quoted with permission of the Editor of *The Human Factor* (the Journal of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology), from *Psychological Aspects of the Examination System* by D. W. Harding, which appears in the September issue of that journal, and which contains a more detailed discussion of the experiment than we have space for here.

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methods) is the direction in which the experiment is pointing. The crippling effects of the devices for standardization already in use are sufficient condemnation of the present system. The results of an even more rigid application of ' standards ' hardly need to be pointed out to anyone likely to read this article.

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The School Certificate is incapable of reform ; it can only develop, if reform is seriously attempted, in the direction indicated. To complete the case we should have to give a detailed account of the effect of examination pressure in the schools compared with a specific account of what might be achieved under less morbid conditions. Since space is limited we can give only the baldest summary of what, after all, is a matter of fairly common knowledge. The standard of potential achievement can be supplied by any teacher intelligently interested in education.

There can be little doubt that there *is* pressure. Business men are generally regarded as the major villains, since it is virtually impossible for a boy who leaves school at sixteen to obtain the job he wants unless he has at least the School Certificate.[1] But it is equally essential for the boy who intends to continue at school, and until quite recently, at all events, there was a general conspiracy of headmasters and headmistresses to give the Certificate an artificial prestige by using the results for purposes of advertisement. It is a Director of Education who writes: ' The first reform I would introduce would be to prevent any Headmaster of a secondary school from trumpeting results at his annual speech day.' But

[1]It is bad psychology on the part of the business men since they would be quite uncertain of the general and specific abilities tested by the examination even if it were granted that the possession of a certificate certified anything more than the possession of a certificate, and new interests, ambitions, etc., will lead many ' failures,' after they leave school, to do better work than others who get distinctions. The Matriculation requirement (Latin for the garage apprentice !) is of course entirely preposterous. On this point we are in complete agreement with the recommendations of the Investigators (*Report* Chap. 7 and Chap. 11 §67)—so long, that is, as the examination system lasts.

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it is not only the boys who are thus stimulated. It is well known that in many schools the efficiency of a master is gauged by his examination results—and his job depends upon his ' efficiency.'

There is not a step in the educational ladder that is free from the influence of examinations. Even in elementary schools candidates for secondary school scholarships are specially prepared: ' they are given potted accounts of the lives of authors—Shakespeare, Stevenson, Kipling, De la Mare, even Conan Doyle—instead of their works.' Professor Valentine finds ' a universal conviction among teachers that some parents have their children of 10 or 11 specially coached out of school hours for the entrance examination to secondary schools.' And he instances ' a book just published, the express purpose of which is to help in this special preparation . . . It consists of test papers set by various local authorities in such examinations ' (*Op. cit.* pp. 32-33). It is of even greater importance to observe that many central schools intended to be ' vocational ' in bias (children likely to profit by a more academic form of education have already been ' seeded ' into the secondary school) are now competing with the secondary schools in the School Certificate examination. As a correspondent remarks, ' They need a line of their own, but it is simpler to take exam. syllabuses than to work out their own courses, and the teachers like " results." By aping the secondary schools they are merely binding on the fetters which the secondary schools are trying to cast off, and the function of the central school is destroyed.'

Those who wrote to us on the Training Colleges (both before and after the survey published in the third number of *Scrutiny*) were emphatic that the bad conditions which we described were largely due to the pervasiveness of examination psychology. ' Once in the Junior School the scramble for " results " begins . . . By the time Standard III is reached natural tendencies have been levelled, the classes have become uniform like good squads of soldiers. Though this might be remedied in the High School it rarely is. Instead of being treated as individuals, taught how to discover their own interests and to minister to their own requirements, pupils are given more and more pure information in preparation for Matriculation. Full of information but still without education they arrive at College . . . ' A Training College lecturer describes the result. The crammed students ' detest the books that

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they have studied. They are mostly incapable of private study, still more incapable of taking useful lecture notes. Nor can I say that the Final Examination of the Training College is more satisfactory. There is a great deal of cramming,—simplified in some cases by a knowledge of what the questions are going to be—for several years the questions set in English have involved the same ten poems. If I ever mention a date or a fact pens work vigorously. If I discuss poems as intelligently as I can a third of the students go blank. They think, perhaps rightly, that understanding of poetry is not an examinable subject. Twice when I have been discussing the poetry of *Othello* I have been asked reproachfully if I think they are likely to get a question on *that*.' A university lecturer can take up the tale: ' The system in such provincial universities as I have known is based on the short course (usually of one, sometimes of two years) plus examination. Most students face an important examination at the end of every session. I seriously doubt whether any stage of modern education is so much dominated by examinations. This system affects the teaching directly. It is expected to be " on the course," that is, directed towards the examination, which is rarely more than eight months ahead and always in view. Within this system much good work is certainly done and not, of course, always under constraint. It is human nature to draw blood from a stone. But the system as a whole, regarded from a cultural standpoint, is riddled with arbitrary demands and artificial impositions. It is radically non-cultural: it is administrative. Cramming abounds, though it is not always fully conscious or deliberate on the teacher's part. Even when conscious, it may indicate a kind of conscientious effort to help students along within the scheme of things. A drastic investigation of this " scheme of things " is what our colleges most need—an investigation with a view to extirpation.'

As for the secondary schools themselves, it is fairly generally acknowledged that many of them ' train their boys like racehorses,' that there may be ' heavy pressure from above which can have the most deplorable effects,' and that ' the disease is spreading.' ' The primary purpose of the examination,' says the *Report* (p. 11), ' was to provide a suitable test of the ordinary work of a secondary school at the Fifth Form stage, suitable in the sense that whole forms, and not only picked pupils could properly be presented for it, with the expectation that a large proportion would pass and

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that without special preparation or undue disturbance of the normal work of the Form.' On the contrary, not only is the ' normal work ' of the Fifth Form ' disturbed ' (a nice example of meiosis), there is evidence that the teaching even in pre-Matriculation Forms is affected very adversely indeed by the prospect of the examination. As one schoolmaster writes, ' The Matriculation syllabus often becomes the culminating point of the work of the whole school ;— Fourth Form work is particularly affected.' A specific example may best bring home the sickening concentration upon a narrow purpose that is found in schools devoted to the business of ' exams.' :

' I have never found the examination so crushing (writes a correspondent) as at——. There each boy who completed his course took two consecutive public examinations. The career of the normally intelligent boy ran as follows: Form III (11-12) ; Form IVA (12-13) ; Form VB (13-14+), Junior Local Examination ; Form VA (14+-16) School Certificate. Some boys would spend two years in VB, taking the exam. twice ; very frequently boys stayed two years in VA. Nor was this all. In addition to terminal exams. the Junior Local and School Certificate forms had a complete " test " (*i.e.* in each subject and lasting four or five days) once a fortnight throughout the Summer Term. All papers set had to be copies of those set in the last ten years—except in English Literature since the prescribed books were changed. (It was assumed that you would " get through " the syllabus in two terms, so that the third could be devoted entirely to testing, correcting and re-testing). The syllabuses chosen for the two public exams. were identical wherever possible. Literature, of course, was an exception, but after the Junior Local set books for the following year had been announced, Form IVA—a non-examination form—was set to work on one of them, so that the work could be done twice.[1] In History the restrictions imposed by the examination were far more serious. The intelligent boy who only required four years in order to matriculate would take a history course as follows:

[1]Economic considerations may enter here. Another schoolmaster writes: ' The allowance for English books this year just covers the prescribed Matriculation text-books, and consequently the pre-Matriculation Forms suffer.'

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Form III—a general course in English History up to 1485.

Form IVA—English History, 1485-1714.

Form VB (Junior Locals)—English History, 1066-1688.

Form VA (School Certificate)—English History, 1066-1714.

Most boys would spend two years in VA or VB, thus taking the same period for three successive years. (It is no use saying that the period is long enough to allow various aspects to be dealt with in different years: only two thirds of the period—sufficient for the exams.—was covered each time).[1] And that system was under a headmaster who was in several ways " enlightened," who certainly provided facilities for fostering musical taste, and who professed to attach little real value to examinations ! '

An extreme example? We should like to think so ; but even in those schools which do not indulge in this kind of mass drill the cramping effect of the School Certificate syllabus upon the lower levels as well as upon the Fifth Form is apparent. The *Report* comments (p. 50) that ' Matriculation requirements dominate the situation ; they set the pace in School Certificate Forms, and determine the subjects taken by candidates including many who will in fact fail to obtain the desired Matriculation Certificates. This goes far to render nugatory the idea of the School Certificate Examination as essentially an examination which provides a test of the Secondary School curriculum, but does not itself determine that curriculum.' But if university Matriculation were, as the *Report* suggests, separated from the School Certificate, the School Certificate itself would ' dominate the situation ' ; the same objections would remain. Even supposing that all subjects could be taught intelligently with the examination in view, it is clear that many boys, particularly those in ' B ' and ' C ' forms would have to take certain subjects for which they were not fitted. ' Many of these boys do pass,' writes a schoolmaster, ' owing to

[1]Professor Valentine mentions a school in which ' the pupils studied the Hanoverian period in English History for four consecutive years (instead of reading all the periods leading up to it first), because that was to be the period selected for their School Certificate examination ' (*Op. cit.* p. 16).

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their own feverish efforts, to the nice calculation of subjects in which they stand a chance (others being dropped), and to the masters' examination technique,—for the schoolmaster must acquire the ability to teach just as much as the " dull " boy needs and can acquire in order to pass the examination. There is time for nothing else.' ' Boys are frequently kept at Latin,' remarks another, ' merely because if they dropped it they would only have one language for passing the S.C. The majority drop Latin (in which it is easier to obtain a crammed pass than in any other subject) as soon as this object has been achieved.' One can hardly wonder that a classics don laments, ' The anxiety to get pupils through exams. has led to a widespread desertion of the traditional use of Latin as an educational force.' One further point deserves comment in this connexion: ' The insistence on the importance of a number of " subjects " results in another abuse. Some boys have to take the whole examination over and over—four times is the most the writer has known—because of their failure in one subject held to be essential to an " all-round education." ' The Matriculation requirement of course leads to a further increase in the number of candidates who enter for the examination a second or a third time.

Apart from regimentation, examination pressure shows itself in the mere administrative aspect of school organization. One master comments upon the withdrawal of pupils from the School Certificate Examination: ' We all know how headmasters describe their schools' results on Prize Days,—" the remarkably high proportion of passes " and so on. This proportion is frequently faked. In many schools there is a system of retarding the duller (i.e. less academic) pupils in the hope that they will leave before they sit for the exam. At —— School the facts are these: In the second, third and fourth forms there are three parallel forms, A, B and C ; then come the Removes A and B, and the Fifth Forms, which sit for the Certificate. The A's move at express speed to VA (often with shocking overpressure). The B's move more steadily through Remove A to the Fifth Form, whilst the C's are held back another year in Remove B. It is frequently said of ' C ' boys, " Oh well, they'll leave before the exam. anyway." Even with this mass retardation at work not all those who reach the Fifth are allowed to sit. At Christmas there is a first weeding out,—back into Remove A. At Easter there is a stringent preliminary test and the weaklings

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are ruthlessly rejected ; they do not sit. And that is one factor in obtaining " good results." ' On the other hand, since certain Examining Bodies each year pass approximately the same percentage of the total number of candidates, some schools regularly enter the form below the proper certificate form (most of this dummy form will sit again next year), thus raising the total number and giving their ' doubtful cases ' a better chance.

The moral and psychological results of these frantic efforts to satisfy (or defeat) the examiners? Subservience and timidity in some teachers ; self-righteous conviction in the energetic that examination bustle is ' getting something done,' combined with a real inertia in fundamentals ; cynicism. In masters and pupils alike strain and staleness. In those pupils who have once failed to satisfy the examiner, an unhealthy defeatism quite unconnected with their real merits. ' General effect,—the fostering of the belief that the Examiner is God. Argal, all experience has to be rationalized to fit his known, classified and published dogma.'

As for ' work,'—a summary of many letters must serve. The inculcation of a wrong attitude towards study ; narrowness of approach, ' fierce elimination of anything that will not gain marks ' ; a belief that ' to work ' is to memorize (the method varies ; some boys rely on a last minute cram, others strain themselves to remember an array of heterogeneous information over a long period of time) ; development of a technique of minimum effort, a reliance on tabular definitions and potted summaries ; conformity, ' thinking what one " ought " to think ' ; hypocrisy (' Boys must be taught that they cannot speak their minds. Imagine one of them saying what he thought of the *Idylls of the King* ') ; a hostility towards school subjects, especially to ' literature.' Under the examination system mass cramming is the unavoidable substitute for education: ' The work might be done as well, and probably better, by a staff of sergeant-majors.' ' The most popular method of teaching a subject for School Certificate is to abandon all pretence of education, and treat the forthcoming paper as a sort of sweepstake. A form is crammed with answers to certain questions which are always asked,—or have not been asked in the past three years. The teacher becomes a tipster, and on the accuracy of his forecasts depends the future of the boys.'

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At this point it is necessary to refer explicitly to the educational project associated with *Scrutiny*. This is not the place for detailed exposition ; it must be sufficient to remark that the project stresses English as a method of training in the use of words as ' the tools of thought,' as concerned with the quality of thinking and of emotional attitudes, and, therefore, as the point from which not only the ' appreciation of masterpieces ' but all education must take its start. This is not to claim for English as a ' subject ' a superiority over other subjects in the school curriculum ; it has obvious associates, such as History, and the intelligent science master will not need to be told how it correlates with his own problems.

There is certainly no hope that such a programme can develop—or indeed that any intelligent teaching of English can be done at all—under the present regime or under any modifications that it may take. The subject report on English (*Report* pp. 71 *et seq.*) is vitiated by a timidity that will not allow the authors to see an essential incompatibility between their best suggestions and the conditions of marking described in Part I, Chapters 5 and 9. However, it contains some useful evidence and some acute remarks. One question in particular—' Give a brief explanation of the following and state in what connection they occur :—Lupercal, Olympus, Colossus, Epicurus, Doomsday, Cato, Hybla, Cinna the poet, Drachmas '—is pilloried as ' likely to have a deadening effect on the teaching of English at this stage.' What the Investigators fail to notice however is that the great majority of questions in all English papers, whether involving note-learning with the same brutal obviousness as the one just quoted or not, are factual, and that the remainder (since the results depend upon the ' markable points ') come within the category of ' standardized opinions.' Indeed the *Report* does remark that such a question as ' Write an appreciation of *Lycidas*, showing why it is considered so great a poem ' ' tends to corrupt the teacher's methods because it overstresses mere memory work and the recital of ready-made judgments.' As for the predominance of factual questions (apart from the ' contexts ' which, as one schoolmaster remarks, demand ' a specious and flashy type of knowledge ') any School Certificate Shakespeare paper will supply the evidence. The first that comes to hand is on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. ' Contexts,' paraphrase and repetition supply the first three questions. The fourth is :

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' Give a careful account of what happens to the four lovers in the wood until they are awakened by Theseus.' (Bad enough to mark, let alone to remember for an examination, and it must be borne in mind that all candidates entering the examination room are holding in their minds three or four times as many facts as they can show on the written paper). Number 5 is: ' Imagine a friend has arrived late at the theatre and the first scene has ended. Briefly explain what has happened, and what you have learnt concerning the various characters.' This is not a particularly bad paper ; it is a favourable example of the kind of paper, conditions being what they are, an examiner is forced to set, but—consider what ' Shakespeare ' must mean to a form preparing for such a test of their year's reading ![1] And apart from Shakespeare, we all know how much time that might be far more profitably employed ' must be spent in learning the difference between the clothing of the Pardoner and the Friar, the Summoner and the Man of Law, which is not, after all, information very essential to commit to memory.'

The answer to this will be, of course, that the ordinary intelligent boy will take such questions in his stride, leaving a large part of his time free for ' appreciation ' and so on. But this is not how, in fact, the system works. Apart from the necessity of setting the pace of the form by the needs of its more backward members, all boys have to be provided with a fairly large ' safety margin ' of information (one can never be quite sure *what* will be asked for), and the better boys—examination stimulus being what it is—are precisely those who are most likely to devote their time to cramming. Neither is cramming obviated by a ' General Literature '

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[1]The paper quoted contains, as an alternative to Number 5, there being no other questions but those mentioned: ' What do we learn of Bottom from his own speeches and from those of any other characters in the play? ' and we may remark in passing that these favourite ' character ' questions are as factual as the rest, Mr. Verity (and others) having supplied the answers. Mr. Verity's ' Character of Brutus ' is a prize example. Any examiner who has marked a *Julius Cæsar* paper must know that the most superficial reading of the play (if that) is sufficient for the inevitable question when Verity's list of Brutus' ' tragic errors ' has been learnt. And the marks *have* to be given when the ' points ' are there.

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paper ; schools merely make selections of authors for themselves and treat them as ' set books.'[1]

The resulting inhibition of serious English teaching is really too well known to be described. ' The stultifying result of " set books " on a literary or historical outlook is commonplace.' ' In the S.C. only a very able teacher can make the set books into anything educational ; most frankly abandon the idea and devote themselves to " passes." Neither I nor the boys I teach regard these exams. as having any connexion with the study of English.' ' There is a marked discrepancy between what a boy does understand and what he is required by the examiners to understand. An opinion or the explanation of a text given by a master or the notes may be merely verbally retained (many masters take the examination by proxy). It is no wonder that set-books send many boys with relief from literature to best-sellers, cheap scientific papers, the newspapers and the cinema.' ' The more assimilative ones assimilate so much that they spend their first two years at the

[1]A further quotation from the article in the *T.E.S.* already quoted is relevant here. ' The obvious objection to the intensive study of prescribed books for examination purposes is that it leads to cramming. The reply to this hitherto seems to have been that we must trust the teacher not to cram. But there are two sorts of cramming. One consists in doling out lecture-notes which the pupils are expected to master with no more than a perfunctory reference to the text: this method any teacher of sense can be trusted not to employ. The other consists in a laborious worrying of a book. The boundary-line between this sort of cramming and legitimate "intensive study" is hard to determine ; and the teacher who is faced with the average class, containing its proportion of dull pupils, and who is expected to achieve examination results, is almost driven into it. The set-book system might have been specially designed to enable inferior candidates to obtain a pass in English. Even if the teacher escapes these dangers, the pupil who is hard-working and not particularly bright will too often cram himself. He will regard the English set-book as a text which he has to master in the same way as he masters the contents of his science text-book. And how many pieces of literature will remain literature to the pupil after such treatment? '

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University trying to find some shreds of enthusiasm and understanding, if their teachers are any good—otherwise just going further down the hill. Those who don't go to a University probably find no delight in literature afterwards, or else get no further than being E. V. Lucas-ites.' ' Many old pupils come to me to borrow reading for their leisure. The ones placed highest in S.C. seldom come. The " moderate " ones ask for something better than Edgar Wallace or Wells, and ask for Lawrence, Huxley, Virginia Woolf and Forster.' Finally, ' It is not enough to open up new sources, to teach a right approach, and to make of poetry a part of their lives instead of a school subject. So far as examinations are concerned, this is indeed dangerous. They must also be taught hypocrisy. They must be taught, in short, what are the conventional judgments, and how best they may be reproduced. One set book was a selection of Lamb's *Essays*. What is one to say of a boy who finds *Dream Children* repulsive? I found myself obliged to give him a hypocritical note on ' Lamb's Sentiments ' to learn by heart (he got the question and passed) . . . The teaching of geography or modern languages is far less of a moral strain.'

As for the set books themselves, the remark that ' Only too frequently the English teacher finds himself forced to read with a form a text which he would in no circumstances have chosen for himself ' is an understatement. ' The English texts prescribed for the —— School Certificate are incredibly badly chosen. They take little or no account of the needs of the immature mind ; they have frequently only academic interest. They seem to be chosen by random reference to the index of an old-fashioned History of Literature. There is no suggestion that the literature of to-day has anything to say to examination candidates: attention must be concentrated on the masterpieces of the past—preferably those which have a flavour only to be appreciated by the adult reader . . . They are so dull and remote from living interest that teaching is becoming a farce.' (This opinion is from an experienced schoolmaster whose books on the modern scene have won considerable respect.) It is the same Examining Body that is referred to by a lecturer in education (an examiner) who writes, ' The English books for School Certificate are chosen blindfold (or possibly because a friend's friend has published a text). I can account for them in no other way.' Many of the books are, of course, quite unsuited to

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boys and girls of sixteen:—Lamb's *Letters*, Hazlitt's *Essays*, Book III of *The Golden Treasury*, *Lyrical Ballads*, *Childe Harold* Canto IV, *Virginibus Puerisque*, Milton's Minor Poems, *Comus* and *Paradise Lost* Books I and II.[1] Many more are not only unsuitable ; if they encourage anything it is a taste in literature that one had better be without,—Modern Essays (by the usual belletrists), *The Story of Dr. Johnson* and *Poems of To-day*.

There remains to be considered the whole paraphernalia of annotated editions, ' critical introductions,' textual and etymological information, and notes ' which chase all the jolly little allusions to their holes.' It must be fairly clear that ' An annotated text-book of the kind used for examinations, in English more particularly, impels most boys to accept the notes as of more importance than the original text.' Most of them are ' too pompously authoritative, giving no chance to develop the children's independence and taste, and often quite uncritical: " All these are beautiful ; you are supposed to enjoy them ; if you can't, then you are uncultured." ' The motivation of the majority is only too apparent: ' The types of book available have clearly been constructed to meet the requirements of the examination ; they are a comfortable source of income.' As the *Report* observes, apparently without irony, ' There is no reason to fear that text-books will fail to follow the demands of the Examiners.' There is no need to particularize. Any schoolmaster can take down the first one from his shelf and see if the introduction really says anything of importance, or if, for a difficult passage of verse, the notes do anything to explain *what the poet is doing* at this point—his meaning in the full sense—beyond giving a little information of the dictionary kind. Such book-making only too often gives merely a rehash of the voluminous notes of the old annotated editions plus a few questions from recent examination papers.[2] Any English master interested in education who

[1] ' Boys who have not taken Latin find Milton almost a foreign language. It is usually these same boys for whom S.C. is a necessity.'

[2] University Presses themselves publish collections of School Certificate questions already set in particular subjects, and these, we know, are regularly used in School Certificate forms.—It is time too that public attention were called to the whole series of cram books

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has prepared a School Certificate form knows that bitter feeling of waste. So much *might* be done—and he has to spend his time ramming home unimportant details of—not to take the worst examples—*Henry V, An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey*.

* * * * *

Since the damage done to education by external, 'standardizing' examinations is so gross, obvious, pervasive and inescapable, the time has come to press, firmly, for their abolition.

This raises certain practical considerations, not least of which concerns the forces that would be drawn up against such a proposal. We said above that business men were generally regarded as the major villains, but it will be well, for the moment, to turn our attention elsewhere, namely to the universities. The point is raised by a college tutor who writes: 'There can be no doubt of the deadening effect of excessive bulk-examining. Unfortunately excess is all too frequent. Very many people are too much dependent upon the pay which such examining brings in, and they correct annually hundreds—thousands even—of scripts. In fact such pay is commonly regarded as a regular supplement to the salaries of modern university teachers, many of whom would indeed be sorely distressed if it were to be cut off. Revise the modern universities' scale of pay, and you will have gone a long way towards removing

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issued at top speed by some firm as soon as a new syllabus is made known. These contain specimen questions and model answers, so that anything from the character of Satan to the urbanity of Addison can be got up with the least possible reference to the text. Some of these ('Many of the authors are, or have been, Examiners in English for important examining bodies, and therefore claim an unusually intimate acquaintance with examiners' requirements') have fulsome introductions assuring their readers that they 'are not designed primarily to enable students to pass examinations, but chiefly to guide them to such an appreciation of literature as will be a joy to themselves.' However the next page begins, 'A student working for an examination paper in——should be prepared to answer questions on . . .' So probably the 'young readers' know better.

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the vested interest which at present makes it so difficult for many men of fairly average honesty to open their mouths about the system.' This is not the place—the salaries of schoolmasters, and others, being what they are —to consider such a proposal (though there is something wrong with a university which *expects* its lecturers to do a month's external examining or more each year[1]), and there is no reason why the stress should be laid upon the modern universities merely. What is important, however, is the point that there are vested interests in the examination system. The *Report* remarks (p. 18) that ' the several Examining Bodies are in the position of competitors and stand to gain financially if the number of schools taking their examinations is increased,' and that many of them make quite handsome profits. What it does not tell us however is how much is earned (or received) by individual examiners each year, and the salaried university positions which they occupy. We should like to know. It would at any rate provide *one* answer to the *cui bono*? which is a necessary preliminary to any discussion of reform. Even Messrs. Armstrong Vickers have to publish the names of their shareholders and the amount of stock they own.[2]

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[1]It is important to realize how much good work is prevented when able men are forced to give up four or five weeks each year to examining. The deadening effect of even a few days spent continuously marking scripts has to be experienced to be believed. Certainly it may be said that University lecturers and teachers who examine on this scale (some do more) may fairly be presumed to have given up, for the most part, any serious attempt to qualify themselves, or keep themselves qualified, for their posts.

[2]§31 of the *Report* contains an important recommendation, namely that Examining Bodies should pool their information ' in regard to the total amount of work undertaken by the individual Examiners they employ. In the absence of any such check there is always the possibility that individuals may undertake more examining work than they can properly do in the time.' It is more than a possibility. Such relevant information as we have cannot, for obvious reasons, be published ; but many who have had opportunities to observe must know of individuals who undertake, at a safe estimate, at least half-a-dozen times more than anyone ' can properly do in the time.'

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Such indelicacy is unfortunately essential. We do not suggest that many of those most intimately connected with the system are not hard working, conscientious, and anxious to make the machine as human as possible ; there are a few who put their faith in ' reform from the inside,' and who are really trying to work out a programme. We know, however, that amongst examiners there is a good deal of cynicism about the value of the system, and that the majority admit that were it not for the money they can make they would not mark another script. If those examiners who are in positions of authority and who, as many of them do, really disapprove of mass examinations were to put their convictions on record, it is a fair chance that that bogey, ' the requirements of the business world,' would disappear, leaving the field clear for a new start in education.

* * * * *

The considerations that have been gone through above are, or should be, familiar ; to some readers, perhaps, they are so *ad nauseam*. It was necessary to go through them again because they are seldom brought together, and never, to our knowledge, have the inescapable conclusions been unequivocally stated. We wish to make it plain that we speak with complete responsibility, with the backing of a representative array of witnesses, and according to the dictates of a more than adequate body of evidence, when we state the conclusions as follows:

1. There is nothing at all to be said in favour of the system—from the point of view of education, that is.

2. Really effective ' reforms ' can only make the effects of the system worse ; any system attempting the same function must have the same essential vices.

3. While the system is in force it is idle to think of making Education seriously educational.

The common objection against the proposal to abolish examinations—But what would you put in their place?—may be disposed of now. Mere abolition would be a positive gain. That, by itself, is sufficient answer.

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At the same time we should make it clear that the practical difficulties that the objectors have in mind are not insuperable. There are ' the requirements of the business man ' for example. In the first place it is becoming increasingly notorious that the School Certificate is by no means an infallible test of the relative merits of candidates for a business post and that the special skills and aptitudes required for a particular job are not necessarily tested by the School Certificate. Secondly, it is by no means clear what, and to what degree—apart from some smattering of general culture—examinations are supposed to test in the way of intelligence, acquired knowledge, mental traits etc.[1] It seems likely (one might suggest) that vocational tests would be a surer guide ; and even if it is considered that such tests, at present at any rate, are unlikely to be sufficiently reliable (and we have no romantic illusions about mental tests) a ' record ' from the school should meet the requirements of those employers who do not use professional examinations or vocational tests of their own. This, registering the pupil's showing over a period of years, is likely to be more reliable than a certificate determined by a few hours' writing under pressure.

But for our case it is enough to point out that as things are the employer gets nothing to his purpose—nothing certain but a certificate showing that the holder has a certificate.

It will be argued, of course, that there would be no means of preventing masters and pupils from slacking if the external ' stimulus ' were withdrawn. An adequate system of inspection (which would also ensure a certain standardization of such certificates as might be issued by the schools themselves) would provide an answer for those who need reassurance on this point. But the idea that examinations are a valuable ' incentive ' is radically false. Those masters who might neglect work were it not for 'the exams.', at present cram their boys because this is easier than to educate them. And there are means of penalising idleness,—whereas cramming is not penalised. Indeed to raise such an objection is to betray a complete ignorance of the kind of work that is done under examin-

[1]On the confusion of function and some more effective substitutes for the examination see *Psychological Aspects of the Examination System.*

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ation pressure, and to indicate a degree of scepticism about the quality of teachers in general which would suggest that the schools had better close down at once.

We ourselves have no illusions as to the competence of the thousands who enter the teaching profession as a *pis aller*. On the contrary ; the persistent emphasis of our undertaking is that without educated teachers nothing whatever can be achieved. There is no substitute for educated teachers, and there can be no real educational reform that is not a matter of producing them and giving them scope. We remarked in the article on Training Colleges that the educational machine works in a round—school, university, training college, school, and a positive programme is necessary in each of these directions. It is particularly necessary (a point to which we shall return in the December number) with regard to the universities. But there is no need to give up hope merely because there is much to be done.

We recognize, then, that a campaign against examinations is not by itself a sufficient educational programme. Nor do we intend to stop at that point. But the abolition of external examinations is an indispensable preliminary to the achievement of any programme worth considering (not that we are going to wait for the Examining Bodies to close their doors) ; and it is practical politics.

It is necessary to insist on this last point because so far even the most sceptical have shown little initiative. ' Criticism of examinations seems to be penetrating even into the daily papers, yet it is strange how ineffective the criticism is among schoolmasters. Even Headmasters complain—and Inspectors. Yet nothing is done.' We hear that ' exams. are a necessary evil,' that ' public opinion is not yet ready,' and so on ; there is a wide choice of excuses for inaction. ' Public opinion,' we reply, (at least the opinion of the intelligent and disinterested which is all that counts) *is* ready : it only remains to mobilise it into an effective force.

Our immediate contribution to this end is to put the essential issues in so clear and indelicate a way that they cannot be evaded and there is left no excuse for ' suspending judgment ' or for any other form of enlightened complicity. We conclude, then :

(a) It would be a clear gain to abolish the system completely and at once.

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(b) Therefore the question ' What are you going to put in its place? ' must not be allowed to distract or dissipate the demand for immediate abolition.

(c) Therefore those who work the system while expressing dissatisfaction with it are in a peculiarly unedifying moral position if they do not use their authority and influence as (a) suggests.

We submit that there is no answer to these conclusions that is not disabled by the case presented above, though there are many forms, direct and indirect, conscious and unconscious, respectable and otherwise, of vested interest.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

[*The Editors wish to thank all those who, by sending criticism and information, helped in the preparation of this article. All unacknowledged quotations are from letters.*]

TO MAECENAS

You, my friend,
Who are not apt to notice things like these,
Remarked how well the buds had rallied
After the spite of an inconstant spring.
So you and I,
Who sleep the time of our short tenancy,
And spoil no dreams as some men do
With too much thought and too much noticing—
We sometimes, forced by circumstance, extend
The scope of our habitual view.

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My friend,
You know me: I am one
With few ambitions, one who sails
A middle course and is content to stand
Irresolute while others choose
The sinful many or the righteous few ;
And yet,
Who will reprove me if I live
And flatter neither right nor wrong,
But speak men fair and render more
To Cæsar than is Cæsar's due ?

My friend,
You know it is not in us to devise
Hypotheses of virtue, nor presume
A knowledge of some paradise beyond
The human senses' farthest range ;
And what shall speculation profit us—
We two,
Who have no interest in the Stock Exchange?
Only, at times, sensation, laying hold,
Devours our spirits, sweeps away
Unvisionary darkness from our eyes.
My friend,
At moments such as these, the world
Which, turning from, we hoped to keep at bay
Confounds us with the truth it brings
To those who neither think nor pray.
My friend,
Searched out by the dynamic impetus of things
We have no meaning—you and I
Who wonder, as we stare about us, why
Our hearts are empty and our spirits cold.

C. H. PEACOCK.

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WILL ECONOMICS FOLLOW THE ROBBINS ROAD?

An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science, by Professor Lionel Robbins (Macmillan, 7/6d.).

Professor Robbins defines economics as the study of human behaviour in disposing of *given* means between a multiplicity of *given* ends. 'The distribution of time between prayer and good works has its economic aspect equally with the distribution of time between orgies and slumber. The "pig-philosophy"—to use poor Carlyle's name for Economics—turns out to be all-embracing.' Any action which requires time and *scarce means* for the attainment of a given end has, on this definition, an economic aspect. Thus economics is to be tied down to a study of *relations* (p. 37): of the relations between means which are scarce and ends which are taken as given,—ends which, in themselves, may be of interest to the moralist and politician, but which are to be of no interest to the economist. By contrast with Professor Robbins stands Jeremy Bentham, as alive to-day as at any time since his death. Bentham, the student of 'Fictions,' professed himself hardly able to understand the meaning of the word relations: 'I'm not interested in relations!' The true function of the economist is *the study of social institutions* and the definition of economics which expresses best the special interest of the economist, is Marshall's,—'Economics is a study of men as they live and move and think in the ordinary business of life.' Professor Robbins attacks 'modern English economists' for their 'habit' of 'describing Economics as concerned with the causes of material welfare,' and bases his attack on quotations from Professor Cannan. It is good to see this definition exploded; but it is hard to understand whom Professor Robbins has in mind as Professor Cannan's colleagues in this vicious 'habit.' Marshall never implied this definition: his definition of economics has been clarified and re-expressed by Professor Pigou as 'The study of that part of welfare which can be

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brought directly or indirectly into relation with the measuring rod of money.'

So far as the need exists for any purely economic theory it seems that Professor Pigou's definition lays down the logical lines for its development far better than Professor Robbins'. For the fallacy of Professor Robbins' definition is that, although it is from one point of view too narrow, it is in another way absurdly broad. Perhaps Professor Robbins agrees with one of his spiritual fathers, Wicksteed, that economic analysis has application to the whole of life. But how unreal this conception can become. When at a dance I invite Nancy and not Margery to dance with me, I am choosing one of two scarce means to a given end. Is this then a case of human behaviour in its economic aspect? On Professor Robbins' definition it is, therefore the definition is absurd. On Professor Pigou's definition it is not a proper subject for economic analysis—which is common sense. Professor Pigou's definition does at least fit in with common sense, but it has dangers of its own. Economic welfare is not the whole of welfare: there are clashes between economic and total welfare, there is no happy pre-ordained harmony. But that does not prevent Professor Pigou from constructing a body of analysis which concentrates attention on the effect, of any conceivable causes experience and the facts of the world suggest, on the size and distribution of the National Dividend. The structure is beautiful from the mathematical-æsthetic point of view. The only question which remains unsettled, after, as before, its construction, is just how far the study of economic welfare in isolation has *significance*. The study of total welfare, 'Sociology' if you will, can alone supply the answer.

Sociology, as the co-ordinator of the Social Sciences, alone has ultimate significance. And yet we find in Professor Robbins' so-called *Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science* no mention of Sociology save for a phrase about the 'sociological penumbra' and some remarks on 'the bearing of all this on the celebrated Materialist or Economic Interpretation of History,' the doctrine that all changes in social institutions are the result of changes in the technique of production. He flatters himself on having freed economics by definition of 'materialism': whereas in fact the Marshallian school has never held economics to be 'materialist.' Professor Robbins is no more than re-iterating

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a disclaimer which the public never tires of hearing and always applauds. He goes on to disclaim the Marxist analysis because it is by definition 'non-economic.' 'From the point of view of Economic Science it is sheer metaphysics,' for economics, in Professor Robbins' hands, is to take 'changes in relative valuations' as 'given data'; and is not interested in the 'metaphysical' problem as to whether the Marxists are right in holding—or, we may add, whether Professor Robbins is right in interpreting their doctrine to imply—that 'there are no autonomous changes on the Demand side'—because ultimate valuations are determined by technical conditions, like everything else in life.

Professor Robbins has an aphorism or two to offer, as for example, 'It is not true that all things work together for *material* good to them that love God.' Everywhere we find instances pointing to the conclusion that everything sound which Professor Robbins says has been said before—though not *ad nauseam* it must be conceded—and everything new he has to say is either obvious or iconoclastic. Study of the intricacies of modern economic theory suggests that the one thing the economist is in danger of forgetting is that the law of diminishing returns (though in its original form it proves to be yet another addition to a larger pile of 'empty economic boxes,') has a valid application to the *study of itself,* and that a point has been reached when it may be that the application of further 'doses' of human thought is calculated to yield a diminishing return of product, in the form of light as well as of fruit. We may therefore congratulate Professor Robbins on having discovered the one topic on which the law of diminishing returns in 'economics' has not yet begun to operate, and on which further discussion is of vital importance, the discussion of *first* things, of the nature, and, more important, of the significance, of economic science.

It is almost incredible to read (p. 72) that Professor Robbins regards this Essay as arriving 'at conclusions which are based on the inspection of Economic Science as it actually exists.' It is of course true that Professor Robbins' own theory is an attempt at synthesis rather than an original contribution. His spiritual fathers—Böhm-Bawerk and Wicksell, Wicksteed, Edgeworth and Knight—all pass under review, and the outline of the 'Equilibrium Analysis' emerges. But no-one, even its author, would regard

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this analysis as given once and for all. And many would question his dogma that the controversy as to 'how Economics should be pursued' is 'settled as between reasonable people'!

To the student who is bent on the study of human behaviour as exemplified in the working of particular social institutions, and who is not interested in 'relations' as such or in the economic aspect alone of any institution, Professor Robbins has nothing to contribute. Nothing, save the implicit advice to go and 'sin' no more; or, if confirmed in the path of 'sin,' to run away into the woods of sociology or ethics or politics, and to abandon economics to those who are interested in this thing and who do not pause to consider whether economics in its present form represents rich pastures or arid desert. 'The borderlands of Economics,' we are pointedly told, 'are the happy hunting ground of the charlatan and the quack.' Don't spoil their fun!

'Everywhere means, nowhere an end': on this text the barren controversies of economic science go on. Goethe, in the role of dramatic critic, described a certain Romantic drama as 'A pathological product, as in it are treated with exaggerated emphasis the parts which have no substance, and, on the other hand, those that would require substance are lacking.' If Goethe were alive to study modern economics as exemplified by Professor Robbins would he choose his language less carefully in phrasing his criticism?

In the main Professor Robbins' contentions are unlikely (save on special points) to gain assent from his colleagues, at any rate from economists of the Cambridge school, though in Austria his work will be welcomed with sympathy. Mr. Robertson would not let pass the remarks on the irrelevance of the idea of Real Cost (p. 80). His break away from the assumptions of psychological Hedonism (p. 84) is however to be welcomed. And his attack on the notion that Equalitarians can derive support from the law of diminishing marginal utility (p. 121) reminds us that there is a 'philosophical difficulty' in the *assumption* underlying this 'law'—the assumption that different people's satisfactions can be compared. The most valuable part of the book is Chapter III, on the Relativity of Economic Quantities, written on the text of Jevons 'in economics bygones are for ever bygones,' and based on the fundamental conception that 'Value is a

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relation not a measurement.' He there points out the limited meaning contained in statistical computations of the National Dividend. And it must be admitted that he advances a strong case, through these examples, for the adoption of his definition of Wealth as dependent on 'Scarcity,' *i.e.* 'limitation in relation to Demand'; on which, as he would argue, hangs his definition of Economics itself. Within the limitations Professor Robbins imposes upon himself he has certainly made a contribution of real value on these topics; and he would not claim that he is doing more than reveal conclusions implicit in earlier work. Within his chosen *terrain* Professor Robbins' conclusions are indeed unimpeachable. The Austrian theory exercises a strange fascination over the minds of many respectable economists. There is not space here to support its fallacies. Suffice it to throw out a dark hint: that there is promise in Cambridge of a rehabilitation of the Ricardian and hence of the Marxian Labour theory of value. If that current of thought justifies its promise it will be revealed that the Austrians (in Austria and at the London School) are living in a bourgeois Cloud-cuckoo land.

If we were hidebound by Professor Robbins' discipline we should never study a problem straight-forwardly as a whole, but only the 'economic aspect' of a problem. The study of a social problem as a whole is left to the moralist and the politician. If this view were endorsed by modern economists, in their practice as well as their theory, it would simply mean that what are ordinarily called 'economic' problems would *never* get discussed by our intellectual leaders in a straight-forward way. An instance of this is Professor Robbins' treatment of the social institution Prostitution (p. 27). A study of the relation between scarce means and a given end is here of no interest or significance whatever. By way of contrast, several social philosophers, who are not hidebound by reverence for a formula, have studied Prostitution and come to the conclusion that its cause and basis is 'economic'—in the sense that hired love is the result of the inequality of incomes. Here again we find that Professor Pigou's definition of the term economic is more adequate than that of Professor Robbins, which bears no relation to common usage. Professor Robbins' remarks on Prostitution are a good example of the futility and the hairsplitting which insistence on studying the economic aspect in isolation

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involves. He is arguing against Professor Cannan's definition of economics as 'the causes of material welfare' and remarks: 'Professor Cannan is a little too apt to follow St. Peter and cry, "Lord, I have never touched the unclean thing;"' and he urges, in opposition to Professor Cannan's desire to exclude Prostitution (and such like) from economic study, that 'services of prostitutes are scarce' and that therefore 'there is an economic aspect of hired love. . . .' How very interesting study from this aspect can be made to appear! Compare with it the penetrating analysis of Prostitution given by a political economist of another school, Bernard Shaw, a thinker who is not afraid to draw upon resources of knowledge in every field, in politics, and ethics, as well as in economics. Prostitution is a fit subject for study *as a social institution*; the study of the fluctuations of prices in the market for hired love can in itself contribute nothing of any interest.

And yet there is one signal service which Professor Robbins has performed by the writing of this book. He has continued the good work begun by Professor Sargant Florence in his tract 'Uplift in Economics,' a plea for the exclusion of ethical considerations from economics. It is the old controversy—Economics and Ethics, what is and what ought to be: but it is a controversy which still rages, and is the most prolific source of misunderstanding and ill-feeling in the social sciences. Professor Robbins opposes the view expressed by Mr. Hawtrey, and championed by Mr. Hobson, that 'Economics cannot be dissociated from Ethics,' commenting on it that 'unfortunately it does not seem logically possible to associate the two studies in any form but mere juxtaposition.' He argues (p. 132) that there is a 'logical gulf fixed between positive and normative studies,' between what is and what ought to be, and that no good purpose can be served by not keeping separate two studies which are different in kind. Now we may be thankful for small mercies: Professor Robbins points out that his procedure 'simply empties out of economics any "economic" presumption that the valuations of the market place are ethically respectable.' In other words, because factors get in competition the reward of their marginal net product, there is no ethical presumption that they ought to get these rewards—which are the result of a dog fight or of charging what the traffic will bear. All this is excellent. It frees economists from any possibility that they will ever again

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be charged with having a vested interest in Capitalism—for the reason that for over a hundred years they have been studying nothing else!

On the broad controversy, however, Professor Robbins is obscurantist. Of course it is essential for clear thinking to keep Ethics and Economics distinct. But this methodological distinction in no way detracts from the importance of bringing the two sets of considerations into relation with one another. Professor Robbins would seem to consider that Economics and Ethics are as unlike as chalk and cheese, and to leave it at that. But Economics and Ethics are in fact like man and wife, and Ethics is as fit to be the man's wife as the fork is to the knife. Professor Robbins' conclusion that 'it is difficult to see what possible good can be served by not keeping them separate,' may now be re-written with the simple omission of the word 'not.' Economics is no misogynist. A marriage should be arranged.

Professor Robbins takes a perverse delight in amassing a huge array of limitations to economics, as so many methodological necessities. In its nature, Economics 'provides no norms which are binding in practice. It is incapable of deciding as between the desirability of different ends. It is fundamentally distinct from Ethics. Wherein, then, does its unquestionable significance consist?' Exactly! It *is* hard to see what is left. But do not be premature in introducing that word 'unquestionable,' Professor Robbins! The last five out of the one hundred and forty pages of the book are devoted to a study of 'Significance.' It is found in the fact that this great structure of analysis 'makes it possible for us to select a system of ends which are mutually consistent with each other.' It would be pathetic if the function of the science founded by Adam Smith is to be reduced to this and this alone. We are safe in predicting that Economics will never follow the Robbins' road. 'In the last analysis Economics does depend if not for its existence at least for its significance on an ultimate valuation, the affirmation that rationality and ability to choose with knowledge is desirable.' A high-sounding phrase expressing a certain truth: but how much light does it throw on the significance of a great science?

The truth of the matter was given once and for all by J. S. Mill when he said: 'No man will make a good economist

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who is nothing else.' Now Robbins does at least concede that outside interests are not proscribed! But he is such an honest intellectualist that all trace of them has to be excluded from his economic writings. It is only in what Professor Pigou has described as his 'unofficial capacity as a human being' that the economist is to show signs of outside interests—only in private not in public life.

Professor Robbins considers the difficulty to be that 'we all talk about the same things, but we have not yet agreed what it is we are talking about' (p. 1). But this is *not* the *root* difficulty, which is rather that, while we all know what it is we are talking about, we are not agreed on the *way* in which to talk about it: that we all adopt different points of view—that different writers adopt an ethical, a psychological, an economic, a political, or finally a synthetic or 'sociological,' point of view, in thinking about exactly the same things, whether it be the crisis, or socialism, or the place of agriculture in national life. Now the significant fact for our present purpose is that economists have not agreed as to the point of view they themselves are to adopt. When Professor Robbins and members of his school pronounce on public policy—swallowing their logical argument that economic science does not by itself represent the basis for such pronouncements—we find them arguing in favour of the *Restoration of the Market,* a proposal which no political party of the 20th century can be found to support. Economics as he defines it 'has most utility in the exchange economy. It is debarred from any but the simplest generalizations by the very *raison d'être* of a communist society' (p. 18). At a time when society appears to be moving ever faster towards the goal of communism is not this rather a serious flaw? We find in a passage in which Professor Robbins is exploding the already exploded idea—'prevalent among the more neurotic critics of Economic Science' that the economist assumes an 'Economic Man' who is actuated by a peculiarly 'low' set of motives, that he holds the view that the 'fundamental concept of economic analysis is an idea of a scale of relative valuations,' which he takes as 'given data.' Thus, he argues, 'our economic subjects can be pure egoists, pure altruists, pure ascetics, pure sensualists or what is more likely mixed bundles of all these impulses' (pp. 24, 87). So far so good. But as we proceed we find that for Equilibrium Analysis it is necessary to *assume a social order,* a legal framework of

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economic activity. 'Economic analysis may be conceived to assume the whole structure of "historico-relative" psychology and institutions' (p. 94).

Professor Robbins' whole thesis is in fact an *apologia* for the view that the economist's field of vision is limited. He is bold in stating the implications of his own doctrines, he is less successful in persuasion as to their soundness. There would seem to be little significance left in a science which *assumes* social institutions and psychology, since these two features are the most significant features of the real world, within (to slip into common usage of the term) the 'economic' field itself. In practice such assumptions mean that Professor Robbins is bound to view the organization of Trade Unions—a factor influencing the wage level, and the system of Unemployment benefits (misnamed 'insurance') as causes of *frictions* in the economic machine. And yet, as any realist economist knows, it is futile from the point of view of practice, and therefore of any theory worth having, to treat these social institutions as frictions: they must, as Mr. G. C. Allen has argued, be accepted as 'institutional facts.' The fundamental weakness of Professor Robbins' whole system of analysis is the remoteness from reality which follows from the unqualified assumption of free competition and from taking as 'given' all the key factors in the situation—even the idea of Social Justice. It is Professor Robbins' weakness that, while he is quite ready to test the facts of the world by the assumptions of his theory, he is not prepared to give as well as to take in the way of modifying his assumptions to bring the theory into relation with the facts. The only advantage that can be claimed for this method is that it simplifies the assumptions of the science. But if Economics goes the Robbins' road the supreme disaster of last century will be repeated: Economics will be misunderstood and misinterpreted by practical-minded people and politicians, so that, as far as public policy is concerned, future historians will say 'it would have been better if economics had never been born.'

The great need is to adapt Economics to fruit bearing. The first essential is the construction of an economic science which, in Marshall's words, 'shall have that delicacy and sensitiveness of touch which are required to enable it to adapt itself closely to the real phenomena of the world.' This will mean evolution in the direction of the analysis which is being worked out in Cambridge

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by Mr. Shove, whose assumptions are chosen so that the theory may become a mirror of fact. The only difficulty here is that the string of assumptions which Mr. Shove conscientiously adopts have all to be fitted into enormous formulæ, and the practical politician can hardly be expected to cope with these! But, even so, Mr. Shove's way is for Economics the only way of escape from its futile pre-occupation, which over-simplified assumptions make inevitable, with the giving of unreal answers to unreal questions.

Beyond the need for a Shovian economics stands the supreme need of the social sciences to-day, the development of a true Political Economy, a return to Adam Smith as some would call it. Economics and 'Politics' (social ethics) must be brought together to produce a body of doctrine capable of providing a direct guide for public policy. The gap which has to be bridged is between the economists on the one hand, who in theory do not claim to provide any guide for public policy, and thinkers in Politics, who at present ignore economics to a surprising extent. In the modern world, where Politics and Economics are in fact inseparable, the time has come for a fresh alignment of intellectual forces, and for the construction of a *Political Economy* worthy of the name: to end this pathetic farce, this giving of unreal answers to unreal questions; and to replace an 'Economics' which by definition is inapplicable to a communist society.

DONALD K. KITCHIN.

Mr. Kitchin's article was, with his permission, shown to Mr. H. E. Batson whose reply is printed below. Mr. Kitchin has had no opportunity of rejoinder.

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MR. KITCHIN ON THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF ECONOMICS

Nature and Significance of Economic Science, Lionel Robbins, Professor of Economics in the University of London, pp. xii and 141 (Macmillan, 1932, 7/6d. net).

Will Economics follow the Robbins Road ? Donald K. Kitchin.

The Economics of Imperfect Competition, Joan Robinson, pp. xii and 352 (Macmillan, 1933, 18/- net).

AS Mr. Kitchin so justly remarks, methodological studies are not exempt from the Law of Diminishing Returns. But, this being so, how much the more obviously subject to this law must criticisms of such studies be ; how hopelessly dominated by it, replies to such criticisms! It is clear that to meet Mr. Kitchin's objections point by point would hardly be an economic enterprise.

This is all the clearer since some of Mr. Kitchin's objections—that illustrated by his Dancer's Dilemma, for instance—seem to rest on no firmer foundation than a disagreement about the meaning of certain words and phrases. *Non ragionam di lor !* Others, again, reveal themselves as veritable sheep in wolves' clothing ; they make their appearance, rampant as any March lion, but their departure is ovine in its deprecating peaceableness. Such seems the nature of Mr. Kitchin's argument on the economics of prostitution, in which he even makes an economist of Bernard Shaw to support a contention that could much more handily have been based upon the teaching of Professor Robbins himself. But, such harmless strictures apart, it seems that Mr. Kitchin has three real quarrels with Professor Robbin's book, even if he is not consistently aware of them ; and perhaps the best way of trying to meet his numerous difficulties will be to concentrate on these major issues.

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I. In the first place, then, Mr. Kitchin seems to dislike Professor Robbin's delimitation of the scope of economic science. Like present-day German physics—and perhaps less like Jeremy Bentham than he thinks,—Mr. Kitchin has no use for the Relative, and rejects, as both too narrow and too broad, a definition that makes Economics nothing more or less than a study of ' human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses ' (Robbins, *op. cit.*, p. 15). ' The true function of the economist is *the study of social institutions,*' says Mr. Kitchin ; and continues his argument as if the scope of a science could be sufficiently indicated by the mere enumeration of the things it has to deal with. But Mr. Kitchin must surely know that sciences are not delimited in this way. Each science may legitimately take the whole of creation for its province and still maintain its claim to individuality so long as it surveys the common universe from a peculiar point of view. *The study of social institutions*—that can be allowed to pass. There are worse catalogue-headings, even in Marshall. But it is possible to study social institutions from many different points of view, and only one of them—that specifically ' economic aspect ' that Mr. Kitchin contemns in one place and acknowledges in another—can be the basis of the science of Economics. Now the very question at issue is, of course, What constitutes the peculiarly *economic* in this point of view? Reference to social institutions, or any other would-be absolute and objective criteria, cannot help us here. There is nothing either economic or non-economic but thinking makes it so. And perhaps why some of us prefer a definition in terms of scarcity to such alternative and long-sanctioned definitions as Mr. Kitchin quotes, is chiefly because the ' scarcity ' definition seems to be a less ambiguous description of a point of view than any of the others.[1] But perhaps all this

[1] ' The measuring-rod of money,' for instance, while invaluable in its place, seems to depend for its very existence upon the explanation that it is used to provide.

Mr. Kitchin nowhere mentions Marshall's own numerous and not always obviously consistent expansions of his famous ' business-of-life ' definition. But anybody with an inventive turn of mind could add to the list, for the definition is about as loose and accommodating as could be constructed. What would Mr. Kitchin

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is merely a flogging of dead horses ; for at least one of the two Mr. Kitchins who have evidently collaborated to produce the above article—the one responsible for the fourth paragraph from the end—would not deny the significance of ' the way in which to talk about ' things.

II. A much more serious issue in any case is that which is most explicitly stated by Mr. Deutero-Kitchin in his last paragraph—also a question of Scope, but more important than the former question of delimitation inasmuch as while that was a mere matter of professional etiquette, this involves the much more momentous distinction between Economics as a science and Economics as an art. Here perhaps it would be well to keep three issues quite separate from each other.

There is first of all the question of whether it is desirable to have ' a true Political Economy,' ' a body of doctrine capable of providing a direct guide for public policy.' It seems highly improbable that any one would deny this. A second issue relates to the proper persons to teach this Political Economy. Surely here again nobody would quarrel with the view that those persons are best fitted to be Political Economists who have the best knowledge of all the sciences involved (not merely of Economics) and the best capacity for balancing the various considerations that these suggest.

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say to a description of the ordinary business of life couched in some such terms as the following, for instance?

i. ' decisions as to the relative urgency of different ends ' ;

ii. ' decisions as to the relative advantages of various means of attaining each end ' ;

iii. ' decisions as to the margin up to which the application of each means towards each end could most profitably be carried.'

Is not this just as ' Marshallian ' a definition as anything on p. 1 of the *Principles*? And, if so, what becomes of the opposition between the *Principles* and the *Nature and Significance*? I believe than an answer to these questions, if Mr. Kitchin would care to give us one, would illuminate his whole attitude to the question of the scope of economics.

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Whether or not these persons are exclusive specialists or also perform the functions of an economic scientist, or of a political scientist, or of a butcher, or baker, or candle-stick maker, is a matter that has extremely little to do with the distinctiveness of their functions. A third issue, only accidentally and almost incredibly connected with these two in Mr. Kitchin's last paragraph, is the question of *replacing* the science of Economics by the art of Political Economy. To argue that round pegs should be whittled down to fit square holes is one thing, and possibly quite a sensible thing ; but to argue that pegs, whether round or square, should be *substituted* for holes, is to make use of a logic that might be easier to confute if it were possible to follow it.[1]

III. The two questions dealt with so far relate to the Scope of Economics, a subject which bulks largest in Mr. Kitchin's criticism. But he has a third objection, which perhaps goes deeper than either of them—an objection to the methodology implicit rather than explicit in Professor Robbins's book and exemplified in the writings of what Mr. Kitchin too flatteringly calls the Austrian economists.[2] Here, strangely enough in a neo-Ricardian,[3]

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[1]In what I have said I have intentionally avoided citing Mr. Kitchin's suggestions concerning the relations between Economics and Ethics, partly because I never feel certain that I understand what people mean when they talk of the Science of Ethics, and partly because even apart from this difficulty, I cannot possibly envisage the results of Mr. Kitchin's match-making intentions if they were put into practice. How would the two studies be joined, for one thing? In series or in parallel? On the model of the theological Mechanics of the Middle Ages, or on the more modern if less subtle pattern of the Chinese Metaphysic?

[2]One can only suppose that Mr. Kitchin uses the epithet ' Austrian ' in a generic sense similar to that of the word ' foreigner ' on Cornish lips. If this is the case, it is a pity ; for after all, the word ' Austrian ' has another and more common meaning which would serve usefully to distinguish that small and effective group of economists who were born or lived in Austria from such of their fellow economists, not born in Cambridge, as shared with them a more or less clear ' scarcity ' definition of Economics.

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Mr. Kitchin's lack of sympathy with what we may perhaps call the one-dimensional or homogeneous equilibrium analysis expresses itself chiefly in a commination of Limitation. Mr. Kitchin realizes, of course, that in expressing this antipathy, and in instancing the less abstract work of the Cambridge School, he is making a mountain out of a foothill. There can be no science without limitation ; and all limitation involves the ' remoteness from reality ' which Mr. Kitchin commands our sympathy in deploring. To those of us who have to be content with second-hand knowledge of what is being done at Cambridge, Mr. Shove is an all-too unknown quantity ; but the description which Mr. Kitchin gives of his present work does nothing to disturb our impression that, like all the best of the Cambridge tradition, it differs from the subject of Mr. Kitchin's criticism rather in degree than in kind. Mr. Shove no less than Professor Robbins, Marshall and Keynes no less than Böhm-Bawerk and Mises, have produced and are producing work that is ' limited,' abstract, remote from reality—in a word, scientific.

It would be most interesting to learn Mr. Kitchin's views on both the precept and the example of a recent addition to the published Cambridge apparatus—Mrs. Joan Robinson's *Economics of Imperfect Competition*. This is a book that professes to make ' only an indirect contribution to our knowledge of the actual world,' that asks politicians and business-men to await in patience that direct guidance the day for which it emphatically declares to be not yet. ' Meanwhile,' says the author,

> ' the best the economist can do is to use what implements he has with the greatest care and precision, and when he does give an answer to some general questions to take the utmost pains to make clear what assumptions about the nature of the problem

[3]Mr. Kitchin's ' dark hint ' about the Labour Theory of Value is dark indeed ; but its obscurity appears to be largely unintentional. Are we supposed to believe that a rehabilitation of this theory—however novel and different from the previous nine or ten rehabilitations—could in any way invalidate the scarcity analysis? And has the word ' hence ' slipped in by mistake? In dealing with the history of theory, Mr. Kitchin seems to be much more vulnerable than when he restricts himself to predicting its future.

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are implicit in his answer. If those assumptions are near enough to the actual conditions to make the answer serviceable the practical man can accept it, but if the assumptions are very abstract the economist will only bring the practical man into confusion and himself into disrepute by allowing him to suppose that the question which is being answered is the same as the question which is being asked.' (*op. cit.* p. 2).

The works by which Mrs. Robinson demonstrates this excellent faith are, not surprisingly, an even better argument for its soundness than her formal confession. Roughly speaking, her book is an attempt to stand the Classical analysis on its head by treating Monopoly and not Competition as the standard condition of the Market. The results of this attempt, worked out along lines for which generous acknowledgment is made to Mr. Shove, are very far from being the mere budget of antinomies that readers unfamiliar with the field might expect. They may be judged by either of the two criteria suggested by the publisher's announcement on the jacket. Regarded simply as an ' analysis which will facilitate the study of those problems of Imperfect Competition . . . which are becoming increasingly urgent in the economic life of to-day,' regarded that is to say as a supplement to the body of teaching contained chiefly in the standard works of Marshall and Pigou, the book is beyond praise. It fills a gap that has been insistently attracting the attention of more and more investigators during the past six or seven years ; it provides long-needed tools for dealing with a No-man's Land in Applied Economics that is at last beginning to be recognized as Everyman's Land.

Whether the book can also be accepted as a sufficiently fundamental restatement of the Theory of Value is more doubtful. There is certainly no doubt that something of this sort is needed, and that it must be looked for in the direction chosen by Mrs. Robinson. But Mrs. Robinson (like most pioneers!) has not gone far enough. Something more subtle than a mere inversion of the old concepts is needed. Monopoly, old style, was not simply the opposite of Competition, old style. That statement would have been a truism for Ricardo, and still a fairly obvious proposition for Mill ; but modern economists have greeted it as a paradox.[1] Perhaps the

[1]At the February, 1932, meeting of the Economic Club, for example.

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starting-point for the new analysis will be found in a re-discovery of its truth and a splitting-up of each of the two concepts into the three, if not more, important elements that demand quite separate consideration.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Robinson's book, judged as an appendix to the Cambridge body of doctrine, must indubitably be acclaimed as one of the books of the year—and incidentally as a living witness to the unsoundness of Mr. Kitchin's views on the methods of Economics. For it shows, more plainly than ten times its bulk of methodological argument could show, that in this matter of 'unreality' we are, of course, all in the same boat. Nobody would deny that the greatest possible approximation of theory to experience is desirable; but, as even Mr. Kitchin testifies, such approximation involves a commensurate degree of complication. The consequent problems in methodological equilibrium (if Mr. Kitchin will pardon the term) are themselves too complicated for any of us to be able to claim that ours is *demonstrably* the best way of 'adapting Economics to fruit-bearing,' or to say with complete confidence whether intensive fertilization and pruning is what our particular tree of knowledge most requires, or some measure of re-planting and attention to such unobtrusive things as roots. The urgency for the need of a *usable* economic science is so great that it is hard indeed for some of the more imaginative and warm-hearted of us to continue patiently at mere spade-work. And it must be admitted that it has not yet been shown nor could have been shown that this is the better way, or the quickest in the long run, although many of us think that it will prove so. We shall know more about that in thirty years' time. Meanwhile there seems to be no reason why we should not part, with expressions of mutual admiration and good-will, Mr. Kitchin along what he proclaims as the King's highway, others of us more painfully and slowly along the narrow path that he has picturesquely re-christened with the name of Professor Robbins, and so see who gets his glimpse of the Promised Land first. Perhaps the ways will not diverge so very widely after all.

HAROLD E. BATSON.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

'OUR SERIOUS WEEKLIES.'

The note in *Scrutiny* No. 4 on our serious weeklies under the heading 'Mr. Punch's Political Supplements' now calls for a pendent. To judge from *Spectator's Gallery* (a selection from *The Spectator* 1932, edited by Peter Fleming and Derek Verschoyle; Cape, 7/6d.), *The Spectator* last year seems to have steered a creditable course between the *Punch* and *Life and Letters* of all our weeklies—the mechanically humorous on the one hand and on the other the literary genteel. It touched both pretty often, but the former always innocently and the latter not offensively (except in the case of Lord David Cecil; one recalls his snobbish exhibition as reviewer of Lawrence's *Letters*). Moreover it contrived to keep almost clear of that perennial nuisance The Essay (as interpreted by Lamb, Hazlitt, R.L.S., Y.Y., etc.), an achievement unique among weeklies. But in these last two years one observes that *The Spectator* has shown more positive virtues than these: it has sought with remarkable enterprise and genuine candour for new talent among the younger generation of writers, and has sometimes found it; it displays (again uniquely) an apparent freedom from the literary gangs, nor is its reviewing given out on the common principle—so evident in the product—of providing pocket-money for the boy- and girl-friends of the literary editor; its poetry maintains a far higher standard than that of any weekly in the language (*i.e.* about one quarter of the poems in this selection were worth reprinting). As a representative selection from fifty-two numbers *Spectator's Gallery* shows up well: compare it with the recently published anthologies of *The Week-End Review* and Y.Y.'s essays, or with any that could possibly be made from *The New Statesman*, and *The Spectator's* claim to be the best English weekly must (so far as literary standards are concerned) be admitted, in view of its high proportion of worth-reading matter, its decent attitude and responsible reviewing.

But compare the best year of even *The Spectator* with any year of *The New Republic*, and one has also to admit that there is something fundamentally wrong with the English conception of a

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weekly organ. Perhaps it is the public's fault ; if so, then the educated English reading-public insists that brightness shall be tied to the humorous, serious treatment reserved for religion, and intelligence only allowed an airing in the company of Science. One is obliged to conclude that first of all we need a radical revision of that public's conception of Bad Taste and Good Form, since it is no more possible to imagine the best reviews and articles of *The New Republic* appearing in any English weekly than the best jokes of *The New Yorker* appearing in *Punch*. But if the public is alone responsible why is it so noticeable that, and in other than weekly periodicals too, the literary articles and reviews form by far the weakest section? Why are they at best so empty and profitless (*Spectator's Gallery* can point to two exceptions—Mr. Edwin Muir on Scott and Mr. T. S. Eliot on Herbert ; as a conscientious though discouraged student of our serious press I doubt if all our other weeklies between them, with *Life and Letters* thrown in, can produce one a year)? Is it that few if any professional writers in the literary line are capable of any intelligent reaction to literature, or must we be driven to disagree with Mr. David Garnett's recent pronouncement that ' Providence itself watches over the serious weeklies, which are all uncommonly lucky in their literary editors '?

Q. D. Leavis.

FLANK-RUBBING AND CRITICISM.

There is, of course, room for a good deal of difference of opinion about the merits of contemporary writers and their relative importance for the future. All the same, one could hardly be anything but amused by the trumpetings with which the *London Mercury*, in its June editorial, turned out the Old Guard against the Reactionaries—those who have reacted, that is, against the traditions of late nineteenth century poetry. Professor Housman's lecture on *The Name and Nature of Poetry* provided the occasion. ' It was like a bugle-call, or the All Clear signal after an air-raid: the population stirred again, saying " Thank Heaven *that's* over!" For during at least ten years, the field of poetry and poetical criticism has been invaded by swarms of people who haven't the least conception as to what poetry is, and who have affixed the name to things which have no relation at all to what has been called poetry

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through all the long past.' It seems that the invaders are in flight and the Editor of the *Mercury* (who has a pretty fair idea ' as to what poetry is '—witness his remark that most of Donne's verse would be better in prose) can now, beer-mug of stout-fellowship in one hand, knightly sword in the other, flourish defiance behind their backs.

In itself the reappearance of this section of ' the population ' after ten years in the cellar is of no particular importance (though one is glad to hear that Sir John is ' breathing more freely now ') ; it is the tone of the editorial that is significant,—rotarian unction is invariably a sign that there are friendly flanks near by. The *Mercury* mentions no names, rightly assuming that its audience will make a fair guess at ' Dons . . . who have tried to analyse the unanalysable, . . . alleged poets and critics who test poems by their intellectual content ' etc., and that it will applaud.

That the *Mercury's* assumption is justified is proved by reference to the recent files of literary journalism. A representative selection of specimens from various articles and reviews showing a recrudescence of animus against Mr. Eliot has seemed worth making (*a*) because Mr. Eliot's poetry provides something of a test ; (*b*) because those pronouncements which sound so brave in isolation lose something of their effect when they are recognized as fragments of a group chorus ; and (*c*) because it is interesting to notice the non-literary motives which may influence literary criticism: now that Mr. Eliot has taken the unpopular side in religion and politics those who have never appreciated the quality of his verse find it safe to deny his achievement.

An article in the May *Student Vanguard* provides a hint: ' The retreat behind a barrier of obsolete cultural and religious prejudices—T. S. Eliot.' Now that the middle-aged have The Young behind them, as they had not ten years ago, they are less afraid of making fools of themselves. Eliot's ' retreat ' was the theme of Mr. Llewelyn Powys writing in the *Week End Review* for May 20th—' The popularity of this poet, so adept at identifying himself with the predilections of London society, may be accounted for in two ways. First, from his disposition to champion orthodoxy . . . This poetical man-about-town . . . whose academic evasiveness has made it possible for him to seek protection behind the fashionable altars of the High Church party.' This ' Diagnosis ' obtained some

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notoriety, although the quality of its silliness was no better than that exhibited, say, by Mr. Herbert Palmer in *Everyman* for May 27th, (' The Eliotites are poets of obscurity, prosiness, experiment, and despair.') or by a *Saturday Reviewer* confronted with *Sweeney Agonistes* (10th December, 1932). But Mr. Powys has some really critical objections ; his preference is for literature all hot,—' every word put down should come to the page fresh from contact with the blood of existence,'—and he is naturally incensed that Mr. Eliot's emotions do not find ' immediate and careless expression ' (like Shakespeare's) in his verse. Mr. G. W. Stonier does not share Mr. Powys' predilections ; indeed he confesses to feeling ' some thrill of the probe, some clinical excitement ' when reading Eliot. Nevertheless he can boast that a review in the *New Statesman's* Supplement for October 1932 establishes him as one of the first larks of the new dawn. More recently he has flattered the prejudices of the *Life and Letters* public by an incoherent account of modern poetry in general (June, 1933). ' Eliot's poetry is at its best a skeleton poetry,'—He is proud of this phrase which he has nursed for some time (*N.S. & N.* 3rd December, 1932)—' but the attempt at finished creation is still-born.' Mr. Stonier's rhetoric dazzles, if it does not persuade: ' Atoms spinning in an immense recumbent hulk . . . the Oblomovism of modern letters . . . An atmosphere of the sick room spreading over literature . . . The message of Eliot's poetry—so far as it has one—is Amen to life, and Goodbye, with rather more lingering, to art.' The author of *The Waste Land* is finally disposed of by a magnificent metaphor: ' His poetry is the afterglow of a gas fire turned out.' It would be easy to add to this collection,—from the daily press, public lectures, and the columns of the higher journalism.

These gestures are not literary criticism and they cannot be discussed as if they were ; they shirk any precise examination either of Eliot's writing or of their own critical concepts. The only interesting feature of the situation is the way the second-rate have all taken heart together. A few years ago they would have been *démodé* in expressing their dislike, for it was fashionable then to hold the tired conviction that there was nothing to be done about it all—economics, politics, education or one's own emotional life ; and, superficially, Eliot's poetry could be identified with that fashion. Now, as long as we can be positive and active, we think it

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worth while doing anything, from strike relief in Colorado to the production of enthusiastic verse about our friends' offspring. Eliot has not revealed so buoyant a faith in simple vigour. Whether his earlier poetry was fundamentally negative, as Mirsky thinks, and what relation his later work bears to it, are questions to be answered only by sensitive and exact literary criticism. The recent outbreak of derogatory articles will not provide that. They for the most part reveal nothing beyond their authors' thankfulness at being able safely now to set aside the writer whose work implicitly condemns their own shoddiness of thought and feeling.

D.W.H.
L.C.K.

*THE MACHINE UNCHAINED.**

The sweat of industry would dry and die
But for the end it works to.—Cymbeline.

A demand that *Scrutiny* should show its colours was met in the issue of December 1932, but it is still objected that little space is given to politics and economics. This is not because we underestimate the problems to be solved by politics and economics—there are readers who accept *Scrutiny's* métier without being deterred from politics—but that political programmes have not sufficient ends: they are preoccupied with machinery merely. It is our concern rather to keep in sight certain essentials, without which mechanical reforms are negligible. Reference to Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, especially the latter part of *Our Liberal Practitioners*, and to the Commentary in *The Criterion* for October 1931, would save much explication, but for the moment matter can be found in one or two of the numerous recent books on ' planning ' and economics.

One may dismiss the orthodox economists who assume the continuance of the ' capitalist ' system ; apart from the possibility that war is inherent in it, an economy which at its most productive fosters the kind of life exhibited in *Star-dust in Hollywood* is better ended. But a charge of neglecting this last consideration is not likely to be brought against the old by the newer economists ; their criticism would be rather that a feeble attempt is being made to

**The Machine Unchained*, by L. Hausleiter (Routledge, 12/6d.).*

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botch up a rotten ship, not that when it worked it offered only a degrading pleasure cruise. This aspect would not occur to Sir Arthur Salter, for example ; of the ' nineteenth century system ' he writes (in *The Framework of an Ordered Society*):

> ' None at least can withhold an honourable tribute at its passing to a system which sheltered hundreds of millions in a comfort known before only to as many thousands ; and which decade by decade absorbed an increasing population and supported it at higher standards of living.'

Temperate comment is difficult. Sir Arthur may never have seen the millions of rat-trap dwellings in our industrial agglomerations, but that does not excuse the dishonesty of that ' absorbed '—how good of the machine to ' absorb ' the millions who but for it would never have existed. After such bat-sighted gullibility, so Rotarian an accent, Sir Arthur's conception of ' higher standards ' and of ' living ' need no analysis: clearly it would be as useless to ask him to contrast the life of Babbitt with that of the villagers described by George Sturt in *Change in the Village* as to enquire what he means by the ' rich heritage of civilization ' which he mentions in the Wellsian epilogue to *Recovery* as being available to everyone who has ' the personal quality to enjoy ' it. Though one may hazard that Mr. Charles Morgan would be the latest addition to that heritage, and that Mr. Lyon would explain its delights over the wireless. Economists who have never approached a realization of the most urgent issues cannot be trusted to set our house in order ; and I have not heard of others more adequate. Professor Soddy, for instance, so far as one can tell from his *Money versus Man* sees the worst effect of the machine in an inefficient monetary system.

Herr Hausleiter's book is a solid statistical account of ' the revolution in the world economic system from the first steam engine to the crisis of plenty.' Till one reads the limiting sub-heading just quoted, the title *The Machine Unchained* is misleading, for it arouses expectations that non-material consequences of that revolution would be dealt with. To the lay mind his account is convincing, if heavy ; nor is there any relief in his incongruous and fantastic interlude, ' A Company Meeting of World Industry,' for it contributes nothing. And the histrionic, ejaculatory manner

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of his comments is not engaging. On the whole he is more clear-sighted than our English economists, since every hundred pages or so he gives a passing nod to ' culture ' : he seems to be aware in a general way that the machine is responsible for the inability of America and Russia to afford an acceptable way of life, and he can differentiate between ' civilization ' and ' culture.' Especially he insists that a large part of our disease is caused by the destruction of the peasant roots of culture : of the industrial future he writes :

> ' In such a human society, utterly alien to all quiet growth, estranged from all the standards set by earth, forgetful of ancient wisdom, there is no longer anything to check the seeds of spiritual and physical ruin ' (p. 283).

His proposals, which apply only to Germany, include the rehabilitation of the peasantry, for as he notes, tractor agriculture is only another form of big business. Hausleiter in fact supports some of the contentions of Mr. Stuart Chase's books *Men and Machines* and *The Nemesis of American Business*, but he does not supplant them : they still remain the best—almost the only—books in their field. They need supplementing, not so much with studies like Hausleiter's, as by works such as Sturt's, and by fresh surveys of the effects of the machine upon living ; there is much valuable work to be done here. There are one or two reservations to be made about Mr. Chase's work : he looks forward to the day when air-planes shall be as cheap and reliable as Fords, and he is uncritically romantic over the joy of driving high-powered cars—it would have been more helpful if he had speculated on how such joy affects the man who drives.

Economists may retort that it is not their business to provide for culture. But there can be no such science as pure economics, absolved from any concern for non-material standards of living. We must desiderate in economists a pervasive understanding of what a culture is, an implicit apprehension of the kind of life to be aimed at in the working of their systems. For once they start on concrete proposals there will arise numerous questions which cannot be solved by economics alone ; that ' higher standard ' must be measured in other than plumbing terms. We need to know where the use of machines can be dispensed with or limited, in the interest of men, not production ; and whether the proportion of work

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worth doing for its own sake can be increased ; and we should like to be assured that the civilization contemplated by economists will at least not be hostile to culture—it is unlikely to be as favourable to the spontaneous growth of culture as past methods of production. One would place more confidence in economists if one felt that they had read and had set their bearings by *Middletown,* or at least that they were capable of using it intelligently. But in how many economists can be found a lively understanding of those issues so apparently urgent that they hardly need repeating—the fact that the abuse of the machine has deracinated man and stripped him of qualities acquired by ages of experience ; that the problem of leisure is central (now that the four-hour working day is in sight) if the race is not to die of ennui or life be deficient when measured by the standards set, say, by Sturt's books. Meanwhile, one of the things to be done at once is to preserve such standards of measurement, the ' memory of a human norm.' Programmes need to have more satisfactory ends than televisors and autogiros for all : and anyone who insists on ' action ' without wishing to label himself politically might consider whether the kind of education we fumble at here is not as valuable as any ' action ' we hear of, and perhaps productive of more useful acts. If the state planned by economists and others is to offer opportunities of turning ' the concept of culture into the small change of daily living,' serious education is not a substitute for, nor inconsistent with, politics, and it can be proceeded with at once. Programmes without a concern for serious education are not considerable.

D.T.

ART AND THE NEGATIVE IMPULSES

VOYAGE AU BOUT DE LA NUIT. L. F. Céline (Steele et Denoël, 24 fr.).

It is said that M. Céline's book went the rounds of the French publishers before it finally passed a firm (Messrs. Denoël et Steele) sufficiently enterprising to issue it. This one can well believe, for there is a sustained bitterness about it, a savage disquiet, which would seem to preclude the possibilities of its finding more than

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a limited circle of readers, and a publisher's literary enthusiasms are necessarily limited by the supposed taste of his public. Yet my copy of *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*, already three months or more old, is from the 158th edition ; and that, even in France, ranks the book as a ' best-seller.' But though such immense popularity can scarcely have been foreseen, it is worth while attempting to account for it after the event, for in doing so one will discover certain characteristics of the book which, though in a sense secondary ones, are of considerable significance.

Finally, then, its general temper is one of profound and uncompromising disillusion, but a disillusion very far removed from the intellectual defeatism to which a small section of the public has long enough been accustomed and of which a larger must always escape the impact. Bardamu, the hero, is justified when, after listening to a fellow-patient's bitter diatribe against war, he sourly comments: ' *Il avait le vice des intellectuels, il était futile. Il savait trop de choses, ce garçon-là, et ces choses l'embrouillaient.*' For Bardamu, though no less aware of these ' *choses*,' is not muddled by them. He relates his misery and failures, not to an involved metaphysical scheme or historical process, but to an immediate fact: the fact that he belongs to the exploited class. ' *Soldats gratuits, héros pour tout le monde, et singes parlants . . . on est nous, les mignons du Roi Misère. C'est lui qui nous possède ! Quand on est pas sage, il serre . . . . Pour des riens il vous étrangle . . . C'est pas une vie.*' He has no time for the ' vice of the intellectuals.' Though he remains detached, the keen and brilliant observer, there is no room in his view for nostalgia or curative hypothesis. ' *Philosopher n'est qu'une autre façon d'avoir peur, et ne porte guère qu'aux lâches simulacres.*' The way he knows of being frightened is that of being killed, of being unable to earn his living, of being engulfed by the misery and squalor of existence. Having, as a medical student, been caught up by the war—' *Ils avaient refermé la porte derrière nous les civils. On était fait comme des rats.*'—he is doomed to the exploration of horror and humiliation. He becomes a picaresque hero, each of whose adventures confirms and reinforces his conception of life ; a conception which, and to this is due in large measure the form of the book, the author never attempts to generalize, but creates directly out of an individual experience. Had M. Céline, by treating

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Bardamu as a symbolic figure, attempted generalization, his novel would have dissolved into a *pièce à thèse*: as it is, Bardamu, by his intense particularity, becomes a representative figure, to a generation for which the economic is, increasingly, the question of primary importance.

This would seem to be the principal reason for the book's popularity, but there are other, subsidiary, ones. For one thing, the novel is extremely good narrative. Merely at the adventure-story level it is engrossing. By a skilful balancing of phantasy and realism, the story, the succession of exploits, is made to intrigue and hold the attention, so that one follows Bardamu with excitement in his progress from the trenches to a hospital for shell-shock, in his voyage to a tropical French colony and his very different journey to America. Even the long Zolaesque episode, when he is working as a doctor in a squalid Parisian slum, though it tends to be too long drawn out, is skilfully braced by a sinister motif of violence; a kind of fantastic horror always on the edge of the ludicrous, like the devils or tortured martyrs that appear grotesquely, yet significantly, in certain medieval holy-pictures. And the *dénouement* is brilliantly achieved: the transition from the hysterical party at a Montmartre fair to the murder in the taxi, and the shift of interest from Bardamu to the murdered man, Robinson, so that the latter's final speech becomes a dramatic consummation, is a *tour de force* of narration, quite apart from its implicit significance.

Or, again, one might emphasize the quality of M. Céline's descriptive writing. It is presumptuous for a foreigner to speak of his style, but it would certainly seem that his idiosyncrasies, his slangy vocabulary and harsh violations of grammar, are very effective devices: once one becomes used to them, they enhance the vigour, the actuality, of the writing. But disregarding this quality, there is an unusual vitality and energy in the descriptions. The book is full of scenes which detach themselves memorably, but which are nevertheless essential, forming a macabre and terrible background for the development of the theme.

But to continue to point to continued excellences in *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*—the unsurpassed passage on the war, for instance, or the brilliantly fantastic satire on New York—is to say little more than that it is a book of unusual and peremptory interest. If one is to go further and assert that it is a work of art of an exceptional

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degree of achievement, one should be able to discover in it a compulsive unity, and the clue to this is to be found, I believe, in a remark made by Bardamu. It occurs in one of those philosophic discursions with which he supplies a running commentary on the objective events of his life and which constitute a very valuable part of the book. He says—and it may be noted, incidentally, that he is considering, not literature, but a woman who has been his mistress—'*Après tout, pourquoi n'y aurait-il pas autant d'art possible dans la laideur que dans la beauté? C'est un genre à cultiver, voilà tout.*'

It would seem that it was this kind that M. Céline set himself to cultivate, and his artistic achievement is to be measured by the accuracy with which he observes its limitations. For *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit* is more than a mere representation of life. It is an attempt to present a valid and a consistent attitude to life by means of, by the separation of, what may be called the negative impulses. Something of the same kind was done by Swift, though the comparison should not be urged too far, but Swift, by restricting himself to allegory, limited his chances of error, since the form he chose enabled him arbitrarily to deprive his creatures of such human impulses as were not required for his purpose. But by peopling his scene with human beings instead of Yahoos, M. Céline, while enlarging the scope of his work, increased his artistic difficulties ; and there are one or two occasions when the rigour of his method slackens and emotions foreign to his purpose are allowed play. This occurs noticeably in the incident of the sergeant in the colonial army, secretly cherishing the thought of the daughter he is educating in a convent at home ; and to a certain extent also in the treatment of Bardamu's relations with the child Bébert, and with his American mistress Molly.

It is not that in these instances the characters behave in an unhuman way, rather that they reveal themselves as too human. Their display of the emotions of pity and tenderness is out of key, and is therefore an emotional excrescence from the rest of the book. It denotes a relaxation of the consistency of the author's point of view, or, more accurately, of the convention through which he has chosen to present that view ; and for the full understanding of *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit* it must be realized that the convention is the comic one. The episodes of which it consists, though often

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apparently essays in naturalism, are actually, with the rare exceptions noted, highly stylized, the stylization being effected by the exclusion of those positive impulses which are commonly associated with ' beauty.' Sometimes, indeed, in his exploration of ' ugliness,' the author makes use of phantasy—Bardamu's voyage to America and his stay in New York is entirely phantastic—and it is remarkable how smoothly the transition is achieved. The reality of the world he thus creates is an artistic, not a human, reality, and it is in this that the ultimate value, the beauty, of the book consists. It is this also that enables the author, with the materials of horror and disquiet and squalor, to bring off his terrific comedy. For, though its popularity is probably attributable to other qualities, it is as comedy that the book succeeds—comedy such as is achieved only out of intense feeling and profound and searching knowledge of humanity.

DOUGLAS GARMAN.

JOYCE AND 'THE REVOLUTION OF THE WORD'

Transition 22. Faber and Faber (Agents) 2/6d.

Transition I-VIII, XI-XIII, XV, XVIII.

Anna Livia Plurabelle, James Joyce. Faber and Faber, 1/-.

Haveth Childers Everywhere, James Joyce. Faber and Faber, 1/-.

Two Tales of Shem and Shaun, James Joyce. Faber and Faber, 2/6d.

Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress, Samuel Beckett and others. Shakespeare and Co., 1929.

The Language of Night (Transition Series No. 1), Eugene Jolas, The Servire Press, The Hague, 3/6d.

To judge the *Work in Progress,* in any bulk, not worth the labour of reading is not necessarily to identify oneself with the late Poet Laureate. One may find some of the propositions with

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which the hierophants of the Mystic Logos seek to stagger the world commonplace—one may think Gerard Manley Hopkins the greatest poet of the Victorian Age—and yet regret the use to which James Joyce has put his genius since he finished *Ulysses*. There is no question of appealing to even the Oxford English Dictionary or even the most modern English Grammar as authorities. ' In developing his medium to the fullest, Mr. Joyce is after all doing only what Shakespeare has done in his later plays, such as *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*, where the play-wright obviously embarked on new word sensations before reaching that haven of peacefulness ' etc.—in demurring to such a proposition, and replying that Mr. Joyce is, after all, not doing only what Shakespeare has done, one's objection is not that he takes particular licences unprecedented in the plays.

Mr. Joyce's liberties with English are essentially unlike Shakespeare's. Shakespeare's were not the product of a desire to ' develop his medium to the fullest,' but of a pressure of something to be conveyed. One insists, it can hardly be insisted too much, that the study of a Shakespeare play must start with the words ; but it was not there that Shakespeare—the great Shakespeare—started : the words matter because they lead down to what they came from. He was in the early wanton period, it is true, an amateur of verbal fancies and ingenuities, but in the mature plays, and especially in the late plays stressed above, it is the burden to be delivered, the precise and urgent command from within, that determines expression—tyrannically. That is Shakespeare's greatness : the complete subjection—subjugation—of the medium to the uncompromising, complex and delicate need that uses it. Those miraculous intricacies of expression could have come only to one whose medium was for him strictly a medium ; an object of interest only as something that, under the creative compulsion, identified itself with what insisted on being expressed : the linguistic audacities are derivative.

Joyce's development has been the other way. There is prose in *Ulysses*, the description, for instance, of Stephen Dedalus walking over the beach, of a Shakespearian concreteness ; the rich complexity it offers to analysis derives from the intensely imagined experience realized in the words. But in the *Work in Progress*, it is plain, the interest in words and their possibilities comes first.

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The expositors speak of ' Mr. Joyce's linguistic experiments ' ; and : ' That he is following the most modern philological researches can be deduced from the passage . . .' (*Transition* 22, p. 103). We are explicitly told that ' words evoke in him more intense emotions than the phenomena of the outer world ' (*Exagmination* etc., p. 153). Mustering his resources, linguistic and philological, (and, one hears, with the aid of an Interpreting Bureau), he stratifies his puns deeper and deeper, multiplies his associations and suggestions, and goes over and over his text, enriching and complicating.

' Few authors ever wrote a sentence with a more complete consciousness of every effect they wished to obtain ' (*Exagmination* etc., p. 67)—but the wished effect (it would be self-evident, even without the successive versions extant of given passages) develops continually at the suggestion of the words ; more and more possibilities of stratification and complication propose themselves. Working in this way, ' inserting his new ideas continually in whatever part of the supple text they are appropriate ' (*Exagmination* etc., p. 164), Mr. Joyce achieves complexities that offer themselves as comparable to Shakespeare's. But, achieved in this way, they betray at once their essential unlikeness. ' The obscurity of that passage, its prolixity and redundancy, all are deliberately and artistically logical ' (*Exagmination* etc., p. 55). Nothing could be ' righter ' than Shakespeare's effects, but they are irreconcilable with this kind of deliberate, calculating contrivance and with this external approach. They register the compulsive intensity and completeness with which Shakespeare realizes his imagined world, the swift immediacy that engages at a point an inexhaustibly subtle organization.

The contrast would still have held even if Shakespeare had had (as we are convinced he had not) to achieve his organization by prolonged and laborious experiment, and his immediacy with corresponding critical toil. The essential is that the words are servants of an inner impulse or principle of order ; they are imperiously commanded and controlled from an inner centre.

In the *Work in Progress*, even in the best parts, we can never be unaware that the organization is external and mechanical. Each line is a series of jerks, as the focus jumps from point to point ; for the kind of attention demanded by each one of the

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closely packed ' effects ' is incompatible with an inclusive, co-ordinating apprehension. The kind of accent and intonation with which a pun announces itself refuse to be suppressed ; they are persistent and devastating. Many of the effects are undoubtedly interesting; *Anna Livia Plurabelle* is in some ways a very striking—and, rendered by Joyce himself, one can believe, a pleasing—performance. But in anything resembling an integrated effect a very large part indeed of the intended complexity must be lost: ' It is possibly necessary to " trance " oneself into a state of word-intoxication, flitting concept-inebriation,' says one of the expositors (*Exagmination* etc., p. 114). The ' meaning,' or an impressive amount of it, can always be worked out at leisure, just as it was worked in (the opportunities that the *Work in Progress* offers for knowing elucidation insure it a certain popularity ; it is surprising, Paris having long enough ago given the cue, that our undergraduate intellect stays content with the *Cantos*). But, at the best, the satisfaction provided even by *Anna Livia Plurabelle* is incommensurate with the implicit pretensions and with the machinery. It is significant that, for the English-speaking reader, so much of the satisfaction remains in the French translation published (with an amusing account of the method of translating) in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (1931, vol. xxxvi, p. 633).

To justify a medium much less obtrusive in pretensions than that of the *Work in Progress* Joyce would have had to have a commanding theme, animated by some impulsion from the inner life capable of maintaining a high pressure. Actually the development of the medium appears to be correlated with the absence of such a theme—to be its consequence. For in the earlier work, in *Ulysses* and before, the substance is clearly the author's personal history and the pressure immediately personal urgency ; the historical particularity is explicit enough and it is hardly impertinent to say that *Ulysses* is clearly a catharsis. But if one asks what controls the interest in technique, the preoccupation with the means of expression, in the *Work in Progress*, the answer is a reference to Vico ; that is, to a philosophical theory.

' Vico proposed the making of " an ideal and timeless history in which all the actual histories of all nations should be embodied." ' (*Exagmination* etc., p. 51). He also contemplated the formation of a ' mental vocabulary ' ' whose object should be to

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explain all languages that exist by an ideal synthesis of their varied expressions. And now, after two centuries, such a synthesis of history and language, a task which seemed almost beyond human achievement, is being realised by James Joyce in his latest work ' (*Exagmination* etc., p. 54). A certain vicious bent manifested itself very disturbingly in *Ulysses*, in the inorganic elaborations and pedantries and the evident admiring belief of the author in Stephen's intellectual distinction, and the idea of putting Vico's theory of history into the concrete would seem rather to derive from this bent than to be calculated to control it.

In any case the idea would seem to be self-stultifying. The result in the *Work in Progress* of trying to put ' allspace in a notshall '—the ' ideal ' (but concrete) 'and timeless history ' in a verbal medium defying all linguistic conventions—is not orchestrated richness but, for the most part, monotonous non-significance Forms, after all, in life and art, are particular and limiting, and *The Waste Land* probably goes about as far as can be gone in the way of reconciling concrete particularity with inclusive generality. Joyce's limitless ambition leads to formlessness, local and in survey. The ' ideal history ' would seem to be chaos, that which precedes form—or swallows it. In it, ' movement is non-directional—or multi-directional, and a step forward is, by definition, a step back ' (*Exagmination* etc., p. 22). H.C.E. (Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker) is glossed by ' Here Comes Everybody ' ; but a multi-directional flux, though it may be said to have something like universality, has not the universality of a mythical figure. Joyce's medium, likewise, is not in the end rich. It may be the ' esperanto of the subconscious ' ; if so, the subconscious is sadly boring.

As a matter of fact, Joyce's subconscious is worse than boring ; it is offensively spurious. It is not that one objects to conscious management, which is inevitable. But conscious management in the *Work in Progress* is not the agent of a deeply serious purpose ; it serves in general an inveterate solemn ingenuity, and it is often the very willing pimp to a poor wit. ' Cosmic humour ' there may be, as the expositors allege, in the *Work in Progress* ; there is certainly a great deal of provocation for D. H. Lawrence's reaction : ' My God, what a clumsy *olla putrida* James Joyce is ! Nothing but old fags and cabbage-stumps of quotations from the Bible and the rest, stewed in the juice of deliberate, journalistic dirty-mind-

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edness—what old and hard-worked staleness, masquerading as the all-new ! ' There is more in the *Work in Progress* than that, but the spuriousness, the mechanical manipulation, is pervasive.

Lawrence, of course, objected to the whole thing ; and his objection finds endorsement in the company Joyce keeps. It was fair to use the bits from his expositors quoted above, since it is not because he can get published nowhere else that he continues to appear in *Transition* ; he, at any rate tacitly, encourages them. We are free to assume that the ' International Workshop for Orphic Creation ' (as *Transition* now describes itself) is under his patronage, and that he does not dissociate himself from his expositors when they issue manifestoes in favour of ' The Vertigral Age ' :

> ' The Vertigral Age believes that we stand in direct line with the primeval strata of life.
>
> * * * *
>
> The Vertigral Age wants to give voice to the ineffable silence of the heart.
>
> The Vertigral Age wants to create a primitive grammar, the stammering that approaches the language of God.'

Joyce (who gives ' such a picture of the entire universe as might be registered in the mind of some capricious god ') is said to have ' desophisticated language ' (' Vico applied to the problem of style '). It is, on the contrary, plain that the whole phenomenon is one of sophistication, cosmopolitan if not very subtle, and, so far from promising a revival of cultural health, is (it does not need Lawrence's nostril to detect) a characteristic symptom of dissolution. The ' internationalization of language ' acclaimed by Joyce's apostles is a complementary phenomenon to Basic English ; indeed, we note with a surprised and pleased sense of fitness that Mr. C. K. Ogden has shown an active interest in the *Work in Progress*.

Their conception of the problem—' I claim for *transition*,' says Mr. Eugene Jolas, ' priority in formulating the problem on an international scope . . . and in giving it a dialectical substructure '—is ludicrously inadequate. ' I believe,' says Mr. Jolas, standing up for the artist, ' in his right to audaciously split the

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infinitive.' As if any amount of splitting infinitives, mimicking the Master, pondering Gertrude Stein and E. E. Cummings and connoisseuring American slang, could revivify the English language.

A brief reflection on the conditions of Shakespeare's greatness is in place here. He represents, of course, the power of the Renaissance. But the power of the Renaissance could never so have manifested itself in English if English had not already been there—a language vigorous enough to respond to the new influx, ferment and literary efflorescence, and, in so doing, not lose, but strengthen its essential character. The dependence of the theatre on both Court and populace ensured that Shakespeare should use his 'linguistic genius'[1]—he incarnated the genius of the language—to the utmost. And what this position of advantage represents in particular form is the general advantage he enjoyed in belonging to a genuinely national culture, to a community in which it was possible for the theatre to appeal to the cultivated and the populace at the same time.

A national culture rooted in the soil—the commonplace metaphor is too apt to be rejected: the popular basis of culture was agricultural. Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith shows how much of the strength and subtlety of English idiom derives from an agricultural way of life. The essential nature of the debt is well suggested by his notes on phrasal verbs. 'For when we examine these phrasal verbs, we find that by far the greater number of them also render their meanings into terms of bodily sensation. They are formed from simple verbs which express the acts, notions, and attitudes of the body and its members; and these, combining with prepositions like "up," "down," "over," "off," etc. (which also express ideas of motion), have acquired in addition to their literal meanings, an enormous number of idiomatic significations, by means of which the relations of things to each other, and a great variety of the actions, feelings and thoughts involved in human

[1] '. . . considering how few other writers have added idioms to the language, it is a surprising proof, both of his linguistic genius and his popularity . . .' Logan Pearsall Smith, *Words and Idioms*, p. 229. (The context—and, indeed, a great part of the essay—bears peculiarly upon the question under discussion.)

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intercourse, are translated, not into visual images, but into what psychologists call " kinæsthetic " images, that is to say, sensations of the muscular efforts which accompany the attitudes and motions of the body.' (*Words and Idioms*, p. 250).

This strength of English belongs to the very spirit of the language—the spirit that was formed when the English people who formed it was predominantly rural. Why it should be associated with a rural order, why it should develop its various resources to the fullest there, Mr. Adrian Bell, illustrating the vigour and fineness of rustic speech in the last number of *Scrutiny*, suggested: he showed ' how closely the countryman's life and language grow together ; they are like flesh and bone.' They grow together just as mind and body, mental and physical life, have grown together in those phrasal verbs. And how much richer the *life* was in the old, predominantly rural order than in the modern suburban world one must go to the now oft-cited George Bourne (under both his names) for an adequate intimation. When one adds that speech in the old order was a popularly cultivated art, that people talked (so making Shakespeare possible) instead of reading or listening to the wireless, it becomes plain that the promise of regeneration by American slang, popular city-idiom or the inventions of transition-cosmopolitans is a flimsy consolation for our loss.

It is an *order* that is gone—Mr. Bell records its last remnants—and there are no signs of its replacement by another: the possibility of one that should offer a like richness of life, of emotional, mental and bodily life in association, is hardly even imaginable. Instead we have cultural disintegration, mechanical organization and constant rapid change. There is no time for anything to grow, even if it would. If the English people had always been what they are now there would have been no Shakespeare's English and no comparable instrument: its life and vigour are no mere matter of vivid idioms to be matched by specimens of American slang (English, it may be ventured, has been more alive in America in the last century than in England mainly because of pioneering conditions, which are as unlike those of the modern city as possible).

At any rate, we still have Shakespeare's English: there is indeed reason in setting great store by the ' word '—if not in the

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revolutionary hopes of Mr. Jolas and his friends. With resources of expression that would not have existed if Shakespeare's England had not been very different from his own, Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote major poetry in the Victorian Age. We have poets in our own day, and James Joyce wrote *Ulysses*. For how long a cultural tradition can be perpetuated in this way one wonders with painful tension. Language, kept alive and rejuvenated by literature, is certainly an essential means of continuity and transition—to what? We are back at the question, which has been raised in *Scrutiny* before and will be again, if *Scrutiny* performs its function, whether there can be a culture based on leisure, and if so, what kind.

We can demand no more than the certitude that there are certain things to be done and cared for now. The line of reflection indicated above leads one to the unanswerable questions raised innocently by scientists who (in romantic or journalistic moments) speculate as to the complete transformation, physical and psychological, that Science will effect in Man.

F. R. LEAVIS.

CANONS OF GIANT ART : TWENTY TORSOS IN HEROIC LANDSCAPES, by Sacheverell Sitwell (Faber & Faber, 7/6d.).

There is nothing now to prevent Mr. Sitwell's recognition as a poet by the Sunday reviewers—except, perhaps, his notes. This volume reveals him as an uncritical descendant of Tennyson and Browning, with none of their technical skill, and a certain smugness of his own added. He is naïvely intent on writing ' poetry '—lines such as these are frequent:

> They cry like sea-birds on the grey, salt sea
> For bitterness of love and never for its sweets

and his images, ' poetic ' in the extreme, are unrealized and arise not inevitably out of the context, but from a conviction that there must be images in a poem, somehow.

This is typical:

> Clear air on hills and softly-whispering winds
> That run in the harvest combing out its locks

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With words to murmur in each listening ear,
As if the cornfield is a nunnery of girls
All at their mirrors, straight and blond of hair.

In *St. Maurice and the Theban Legion*, we are given a picture of Venice, compounded from *A Toccata of Galuppi's* and *In a Gondola*, and more blatantly romantic than Browning's, and in *Pastoral* a deliberate, and unwise, attempt to write another *Grecian Urn*. In short, all the poems are full of badly-assimilated influences, and have no individuality of their own ; Mr. Sitwell's method is shown clearly in *Upon an Image from Dante* where a potentially interesting set of reminiscences is mercilessly poeticized, rather in the manner of the eighteenth-century Miltonic writers.

The book shows clearly the lack of any real public for poetry. What sort of public are the notes intended for? In them, Mr. Sitwell retails with gusto the most familiar classical legends, parades, even more smugly, less familiar information, and carefully points out and explains many of his images. They reveal his culture as that of a curiously naïve and uncritical dilettante, and confirm the impression given by his choice of subjects and his handling of them. The Sitwells, in fact, reflect a society where dilettante art-worship is synonymous with culture, where poetry is supposed to be ' about ' certain things, and where it neither has, nor is expected to have, any relation to any form of living activity.

Mr. Sitwell's blank verse vies with *Hiawatha* for sheer, unrelieved monotony.

FRANK CHAPMAN.

BATTLES LONG AGO

CONQUISTADOR, by Archibald MacLeish (Gollancz, 7/6d.).

To those who associate Mr. MacLeish's name with dilute Eliotics it was rather surprising to learn (from the red band round the cover) that he had written a narrative poem qualified to be hailed as ' great poetry ' by Mr. Ernest Hemingway. Actually, to call *Conquistador* a ' narrative ' poem is to give a misleading impression of it. It offers, at a higher level, a good deal of the

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same kind of satisfaction as Masefield, but not in narrative interest. The point of view from which it presents the Conquest of Mexico is alleged to be that of Bernal Diaz looking back in old age—'*quorum pars magna fui.*' But the effect reminds us of another old man:

> I was neither at the hot gates
> Nor fought in the warm rain
> Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
> Bitten by flies, fought.

That suggests Mr. MacLeish's essential attitude towards the Heroic Age. Not that his nostalgic romanticism can produce anything like the charged vitality of *Gerontion*. There is a good deal of terse toughness and starkness, but everything, as the poet himself says, seems to come from a great way off:

> So does a man's voice speak from the dream that bears his
> Sleeping body with it and the cry
> Comes from a great way off as over water . . .

It seems generally to come from somewhere not far away from the Earthly Paradise—

> The clear wave runs among the island flowers:
> Ancient is all that earth: a long-used dwelling:
> The dead are silent in that ashy ground

—though Mr. MacLeish's day-dream is more energetic than Morris's; or Tennyson's, for all the reminders of *Tithonus*. It is characteristic of his presentment of action that the tense silence of a dangerous moment—

> So do these men upon whose sky arises
> Signalled by solemn bells the ominous star
> Turn to each other with the same surmise

—should be charged with glamour from a quite distant peak in Darien.

That this poetical romancing is (at any rate for us) more readable than the Victorian it descends from we owe to Mr. Ezra Pound. From Mr. Pound Mr. MacLeish learnt how to avoid the tedious diffuseness of Morris, to supply some sharp particularity instead of mere glamorous haze, and to energize the nostalgic

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Tennysonian languor with alliterative Anglo-Saxon terseness (he has not read *The Seafarer* for nothing). From Mr. Pound he learnt how to combine a discreet archaizing with a suggestion of tough and slangy actuality (the Browning inheritance):

> 'That he had no writ nor right to live in that country:
> That his Honor's commission was well-known—to trade
> And return with it (*viz.* return with the cash money).'

From Mr. Pound he learnt his versification; but he has, unhappily, none of his master's variety. He has taken care to make the *terza rima* flexible (he uses assonance a great deal), but the canter of his verse—it has the suggestion of truncated hexameters—becomes quickly monotonous.

Nevertheless, the poem is very readable. One has heard Masefield defended as a possible introduction to poetry for the innocent. It would be much safer to recommend *Conquistador*. While it is well on the sound side of Dauber's embarrassing adolescent malady, it has a sufficiently simple and potent emotional charge. It ends:

> Old . . . an old man sickened and near death:
> And the west is gone now: the west is the ocean sky . . .
> O day that brings the earth back bring again
> That well-swept town those towers and that island . . .

Mr. Hemingway's admiration is explained.

One can say at any rate that if poems like *Conquistador* were read as widely as 'literary' Book Society novels, the prospect for poetry would be more promising than it is.

And it is interesting to see the influence of the *Cantos* spreading in this way.

F. R. LEAVIS.

LITERARY QUOTATION AND ALLUSION, by E. E. Kellett (Heffer, 3/6d.).

PLAGIARISM: AN ESSAY ON GOOD AND BAD BORROWING, by W. A. Edwards, Minority Press, Cambridge (Agent: Heffer, 3/6d.).

'Quotation and allusion,' in Mr. Kellett's view, are mainly in order that certain readers may 'taste their added flavour.' He

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speaks again later of ' the enjoyable titillation ' which results from the ' recognition ' of a quotation or allusion, while ' the *Bard* and the *Progress of Poetry* yield their treasures only to those who know '—Mr. Kellett may be said to be in a sense interested in literature, but a classical education has assisted him to become an intellectual hedonist. He dislikes the word ' artistic,' he says, more even than ' psychology '; he disposes of ' modernist ' verse by a quotation from E. E. Cummings, and expresses his admiration for C. E. Montague. Towards the end he speculates as to why a writer should indulge in ' so trifling a habit as allusiveness.'

Mr. Edwards has what Mr. Kellett has not, fundamental seriousness. This is perhaps his greatest asset, for without it he would scarcely have got sufficiently into his set subject to see in it significance which those who set it are themselves unlikely to have seen. The result is really useful work. But certain qualifications must be made. Though Mr. Edwards has contrived to do useful work in spite of the fact that he was writing a prize essay, he has not altogether escaped the faults of the prize essay. His essay would have served general purposes even better had he not attempted apparently to incorporate in it everything he had recently got out of his work at Cambridge. He would have been more likely to have added something fresh had he narrowed down his attention on one or two points, say on the relation in the work of the Elizabethan dramatists between the traditional entertainments and speech of the folk and more ' literary ' art. By comparison he knows little about the Greeks, Dante, Molière and Bach, so that it can only be supposed that he introduces Bach, for example, with a view to impressing examiners whom he trusts may know less. Secondly his essay exhibits the weakness of what might be called the note-book method. Material accumulated in the mind, as he himself indicates, is much more likely to result in something original than material accumulated in note-books. For one thing it often arranges itself better than notes can be arranged, and saves one the necessity of being crudely explicit as to one's intention. A consequence of the note-book method in Mr. Edwards' case is that he himself frequently exemplifies plagiarism of the wrong kind both from published and unpublished work. This is betrayed by the vocabulary itself which in places he has not completely grown into, or which, to put it another way, has not completely grown into his.

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With these reservations it remains to be said that nothing is less common than industrious scholarship combined with, and controlled by, intelligence, and that these have here resulted in an essay which can be recommended as a sound introduction to the study of the texture of literature.

JOHN SPEIRS.

'GO TO THE PROFESSORS!'

ENGLISH POETRY IN THE LATER NINETEENTH CENTURY, by B. Ifor Evans (Methuen, 10/6d.).

THE NAME AND NATURE OF POETRY, by A. E. Housman (C.U.P. 2/-).

ROMANTIC AND UNROMANTIC POETRY, by Humbert Wolfe (University of Bristol, 1/6d.).

'Go to the Professors,' exhorted Mr. Desmond MacCarthy some weeks ago, reviewing Dr. Elton's *English Muse*: young reviewers before reading the poets were to seek in such repositories what they ought to think and say, since they contain 'concise statements of the qualities for which each poet was most remarkable.' Professor Evans' book is dedicated to Professor Elton, and exhibits the same lack of purpose which was evident in the latter's *Surveys*. The farewell manifesto looked encouraging: 'It is in this belief that our spiritual origins must be found in the nineteenth century, in what we have rejected from that age and in what we have accepted, that I have attempted to trace the history of poetry in that period.' In the wanton disregard of that programme lies the chief disappointment and failure of the book. For the scheme was pregnant enough; it still remains to be worked out by someone who, having thought of it, refuses to turn his back on it. More than once Mr. Evans touches upon a theme which might have been amply developed in his 380 pages. For example, he writes of the Pre-Raphaelites: 'They solve the Victorian riddle by excluding it from their poetry, and yet they are conscious of its existence;' or he notes the remarkable 'unity of tradition' in Hardy's early and later work. But such points are made as though by accident, and remain unelaborated.

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It is well to agree with Mr. Eliot that ' scholarship, even in its humblest forms, has its rights,' but we should accept his caveat, ' we assume we know how to use it and how to neglect it.' Sainte-Beuve in a humble moment announced that his essays were sound monographs for some future generalizer. This cannot be said of Mr. Evan's ' chronicle and criticism of English poetry from 1860 onwards,' for it offers no new fruits of research, neither has it a critical approach to suggest.

If at the end of so much study the academic historian of literature can neither form a basis for reasoned judgment of his own, nor pass on to his less erudite readers some aid in first-hand criticism, then, since there was no lack of accurate reference-books, we must reluctantly conclude that his labour has been wasted. In short, the book ' supplies opinion without educating taste.'

Many who enjoyed the charm of Professor Housman when he delivered his Leslie Stephen lecture will be sorry to see its appearance in cold print. He elected to pour Johnsonian scorn on the metaphysicals, and with Arnold to dismiss the eighteenth century. But his valuable discrimination between the normal ' solidity of excellence ' of Dryden and Pope, and their occasional lapses in mistaking ' impure verbiage for correct and splendid diction,' has been overlooked by those who prefer to intone with the professor poetry which ' does but entangle the reader in a net of thoughtless delight.' (And this refers to Blake!).

Far more noteworthy than the lecture itself as a sign of the times has been the concerted yelping of the higher-journalist critics to which it gave excuse. It would have been over-sanguine to expect much lively criticism of English poetry from a professor of Latin, but Mr. Housman's qualifications were such that his most jocular utterances have been echoed with solemnity ; and conversely among the *Times* leaders, where solemnity is wont to be found, there appeared on the morrow of the lecture a column of skittish triumph :

> ' When the whole lecture is published . . . and this very dogmatic, academic age . . . learns the full sacrilege of Mr. Housman's remarks upon Donne and the metaphysicals, upon Dryden, and upon Pope, there will be some pretty outcries—or perhaps a dignified and discreet silence.'

Cultured people who feel that *The Shropshire Lad* is (except, perhaps, for Flecker and Rupert Brooke) the last appearance of

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the real thing in modern poetry have welcomed this pamphlet as making it safe for them to be quite explicit about the state of their taste. There has been a good deal of amusing explicitness.

Mr. Humbert Wolfe is certainly no professor, but his pamphlet on *Romantic and Unromantic Poetry* was delivered as a lecture at the University of Bristol. It would be profitless to display the opinions decked out in Mr. Wolfe's sprightly and whipped-up style ; it is less fatiguing to enjoy this artless artfulness, this innocently opulent development of the schoolboy's fine writing, for its own sake. After rushing us on an admiring Cook's Tour through the Georgian poets, Mr. Wolfe turns to make timorous and unrelated attacks on the modern ' unromantics.' He achieves some bizarre couplings—Allen Tate, T. S. Eliot and Marianne Moore are dismissed with the same robust curtness. There is a final conciliatory gesture to Mr. Eliot when Mr. Wolfe stoops to ' claim the best of the unromantic poets for the romantic.' He takes his leave with a poem of his own composition which he hopes will clinch his argument. It does.

GORLEY PUTT.

THE CHRISTIAN RENAISSANCE, by G. Wilson Knight (Macmillan, 12/6d.).

As reviewer of *The Christian Renaissance* I am disqualified, if what Professor Knight says of a part applies to the whole and the book does not ' aim to convince the unsympathetic.' I confess to have approached with strong prejudices against the whole undertaking ; and my prejudices were confirmed by the assemblage of influences acknowledged in the Preface : Mr. T. S. Eliot, Mr. Aldous Huxley, Mr. Middleton Murry, M. Henri Bergson, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, William James, Mr. Max Plowman, Canon Streeter, Oscar Wilde and others. Mr. Eliot, I imagine, wonders how he got into this company. I am further disqualified by being no theologian, though a theological equipment is clearly indispensable if Professor Knight's enterprise is to be properly judged. On the other hand, I think it likely that a trained theologian would be no more sympathetic than myself, and unlikely that he would have the competence in literary criticism that is in any case also necessary.

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So, pretending only to this last, and writing from the point of view of one who is grateful to Professor Knight for his services to literary criticism, I ask: How can so much original talent, energy and rare disinterestedness be prevented from spending themselves—as more and more since *The Wheel of Fire* they seem to me to have been doing—to no commensurate end? And I find the answer in a dictum of Professor Knight's own: 'To the true adept and initiate, nothing about poetry will appear more important than poetry itself.' He has spent a large part of his book endeavouring to forestall the criticisms that his method of interpretation might seem to invite, but he never squarely faces the important one: that is, that he has preposterously underrated the difficulty of relevance; indeed, that relevance might be—and in such an enterprise as his, must be—a matter of difficult achievement never seems to have occurred to him. 'Therefore the poet's sources or supposed intentions must never be allowed to interrupt or modify our interpretations'—this is a characteristic defence, but it does not meet the charge, which is, to adapt to him one that he himself brings, that what he 'will not do is to face the literary product.' So when he complains that 'we go on refusing to face the creative visions of poetry,' we reply that it is a question, rather, of asking who, in this kind of interpretation, the predominating poet is—the original, or the interpreter?

He explicitly exempts himself from critical discipline, the plea being that to analyse and check scrupulously would baulk and hamper the swift play of intuition, the immediate sensitive response, on which the virtue of his work depends. And one must admit that, in *The Wheel of Fire*, all qualifications being made, he is justified. But the plea is a dangerous one. Shakespeare's text he knows intimately, and it is a text potent enough to keep the interpreter's 'romantic consciousness' under some control. But with other texts he pays little heed to the 'poetry itself': it becomes quickly plain that the 'creative vision' we are most concerned with is rarely to be that of the poet specified.

It is significant that he should not question his ability to approach Dante and Goethe on the same easy terms as Shakespeare. Something of them, of course, will get through in translation, but Professor Knight shows not the least sign of uneasiness at having to rely on Cary's *Divine Comedy* and Professor Latham's *Faust*.

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In the poetry of his own language his procedure is truly shocking: any text will do so long as it yields a congenial or convenient explicit 'content'; 'exactly the same experience,' he will say, quoting from *Paradise Lost*, 'is being transmitted,' when the passage he quotes (p. 132) proves, to anyone concerned with *poetry*, that Milton was incapable of the kind of experience in question. Worse than that, he seems to rely entirely on the conventional valuations, and will cap Dante and Shakespeare not merely with Shelley, but with the Browning of *Abt Vogler* and the Tennyson of *In Memoriam*—worse, he actually quotes for the sake of the 'content' some stanzas from the disastrously bad part of *The Palace of Art*.

He seems, in fact, completely indifferent about quality—realized value: the general paraphrasable meaning, if it fits the argument, is good enough. On page 40 we read, incredulously, '. . . Kent in *Lear*, Horatio in *Hamlet*, Osborne in *Journey's End*.' On page 115 he speaks of 'Webster, who reached a poetic intensity and sombre magic comparable with Shakespeare's.' On page 116 we find: 'The Augustan period is, as a whole, clearly less intense, the imagination here is more relaxed: and its finest works in Dryden, Pope, or Swift tend toward satire, *a mode which* [my italics] . . . But when intensity returns, we have Gray meditating on a Country Graveyard . . .' Wordsworth's Immortality Ode is repeatedly appealed to, though the factitiousness betrayed in the style disqualifies the document as evidence.

I do not adduce all this for fun, but in shocked exasperation, for even in this book Professor Knight shows that he is potentially a fine critic of the kind that all along he has refused to be. Refused? I venture to ask him if it has ever occurred to him that there is not a paragraph of criticism in all the six volumes of Dr. Elton's *Survey of English Literature*. And myself I remind that the age of Professor Whitehead, Canon Streeter and Mr. Middleton Murry is an age unfavourable to the development of critics, as it is of poets. *The Christian Renaissance* is neither criticism nor poetry—Professor Knight, I suspect, will say it is some third thing, combining them, perhaps, and I can only reply that it has the disadvantages of abstract writing without the virtues. One cannot miss the genuine excitement that thrills in it, but, however intensely Professor Knight may feel, there is little that is intense in the book. One guesses that in another age he might have been a poet; but to be

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a poet he would have to make himself more of a critic. In his Preface he invokes Mr. T. S. Eliot: let him read the essay in *The Sacred Wood* on Mr. Arthur Symons.

Yet there is something admirable about the very extravagance of Professor Knight's ambition. One cannot imagine Mr. Symons proposing to regard ' the whole New Testament as a single art-form of Shakespearian quality ' or prophesying the ' advent of a newly Christianized literature and a newly poetic Christianity.' The courage and the energy are magnificent: is refusal of discipline their essential condition?

F. R. LEAVIS.

FILM, by Rudolf Arnheim (Faber and Faber, 15/-).

Film sets out avowedly to show that film is art ; and the author concludes in the conviction that this is satisfactorily proved. It ends by convincing us that film might be (and occasionally has been) put to intelligent and expressive uses.

When he talks of ' the great American pictures of society life with their tremendously refined direction and photography,' we wonder. Our doubts have increased by the time we reach his chapter on Greta Garbo. (It is interesting in showing to what lengths the ' intellectual ' cult of cinema will go, and the kind of psychological smoke-screen the highbrow will throw out to justify his own surrender to the onanistic flesh-and-underclothing motifs).

There is the customary failure to distinguish between technique and expression. When he is talking of (for example) ' the apparent alterations in size ' (distortion, etc.) ' which might be used to achieve artistic effect,' he is worth reading ; he is illuminating too in his discussion of the limitations of the montage theory ; but when—to take a gross example—he discusses as ' art ' how much more beautiful Garbo is under American arc-lights than under Pabst, there is an obvious confusion. He praises films which he should ignore if he is to be taken critically—*i.e.* he is talking about science (technique) when he imagines himself to be talking about art (expression). He seems reluctant to admit the power, æsthetic or anæsthetic, of sound. To say of the spoken word that ' all that can be said about it does not apply only to talkies but also to theatre ' is, as I have shown in *Scrutiny of Cinema*, an elementary

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misconception. The idea of ' art ' films and 100% talkies developing independently towards art and reality is too naïve to discuss.

He is at his best discussing technical possibilities. His analysis and classification is the most thorough and intelligent that has yet appeared. It would be unfair to say that he ignores entirely the sociological aspect of the cinema in a survey which purports to be complete. But he says nothing which a highly paid newspaper film reporter could not safely say. *Star-dust in Hollywood*, read after *Film*, would reveal the latter's limitations in this respect most clearly.

WILLIAM HUNTER.

MOSCOW DIALOGUES, by Julius F. Hecker (Chapman and Hall, 8/6d.).

IN PLACE OF PROFIT, by Harry F. Ward (Scribners, 12/6d.).

THE TRUTH AND ERROR OF COMMUNISM, by H. G. Wood (Student Christian Movement Press, 4/-, Paper cover 2/6d.).

In England we have not till lately been accustomed to the kind of discussion of revolutionary theory which Dr. Julius Hecker's *Moscow Dialogues* represents. True, it is impossible to read the first five chapters of *Capital* without at least understanding that communist economics imply a communist theory of knowledge in the most technical sense. But it is precisely that part of Marx's writings which is least discussed here. Such discussion as men like A. D. Lindsay and G. D. H. Cole have provided limits itself to the most jejune points. Like Dr. Johnson's interlocutors at the brewery sale, such critics do not see that what is toward is not simply a discussion of business methods, but, to borrow the Kantian title, a prolegomena to any future theory of knowledge. Of their superficialities one of the books reviewed here is a direct inheritor. In *The Truth and Error of Communism* H. G. Wood has done little more than reiterate their arguments.

But the swift changes of the past two years have awakened a more eager and informed curiosity. *Moscow Dialogues* revives the type of discussion which went on in the Continent before the war when Croce wrote his *Historical Materialism* and Kautsky was purporting to extend the boundaries of Marxist thinking. In

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England[1] such discussion is only now beginning. Its main theme is to establish the place of Dialectical Materialism in the history of philosophy. The difficulty in this is that either your history of philosophy has to be rewritten or Dialectical Materialism has to be doctored to fit existing tradition.

Thus, if we were to attempt to assess the significance of, say, T. S. Eliot in literary history, it would not be enough to append a note at the end of the Whittier-Longfellow-Whitman chapter ; we should find ourselves beginning to rewrite the Elizabethan chapters first. And the process would not end there. For a new and original writer demands a violent readjustment even of the tradition to which he conforms.

That in finding its place in history he minimises the violence of the thought revolution Dialectical Materialism implies is the main criticism to be made of Dr. Julius Hecker's *Moscow Dialogues*. Admirable as his purpose is in stressing the truth that Dialectical Materialism grows naturally out of the evolving theory of knowledge—the subjectivism of Berkeley transformed into the scepticism of Hume,—that scepticism transformed into the critical philosophy of Kant which in turn gave way to the dialectical idealism of Hegel—admirable as Dr. Hecker's purpose is, it fails utterly if he does not sufficiently recognize that the final step from Hegel to Marx involves *discontinuity* and precisely one of those ' leaps ' which revolutionary philosophy and the science of biology claim to be characteristic of life.

So much for the general impression. Of the particular issues raised in these twenty dialogues between half-a-dozen representative Americans and the communist Socratov, the most striking is the account of the defeat of ' the mechanists ' among communist philosophers by the true dialecticians. We find that in the part as in the whole Dr. Hecker's premature reconciliation between communist and traditional nineteenth century philosophy introduces a false emphasis. The tendency to introduce into communist thought the dry, old-fashioned materialism which takes us back to the conservative Spencer, and, overleaping two centuries, to the monarchist Hobbes, has of course to be resisted. Those who struggle against

[1]In such books as Professor Levy's *The Universe of Science* and in the discussion which an Oxford philosopher, Mr. E. F. Carritt, has lately opened in the *Labour Monthly*.

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it must of course invoke the subtlety of dialectic thought in which opposites interpenetrate, and in which matter becomes a thinking substance. But in the emphasis on the method of dialectic there is a danger in dwelling on the form which it took over from Hegelian idealism at the expense of its revolutionary content, a danger which Dr. Hecker does not always escape. To take a practical instance—whenever Gandhi appears, as he does more than once in the dialogues, Socratov refrains from giving him his quietus with the firmness we should expect of a communist philosopher.

The dedication of *Moscow Dialogues* to the author of the next book on this list breathes an atmosphere which most communists would find disconcerting. It runs: ' To Professor Harry F. Ward, Friend and Comrade in the struggle for a social order where strife of class and race shall be no more, and where truth, goodness and beauty shall be the share of all.' A suspiciously un-communist millenium! Even so there is this to be said for Dr. Hecker's quasi-idealist approach, that it gives him some appreciation of the manner in which the dialectic of revolution realises—as if *en passant*—the aspirations of a nineteenth century liberalism; for instance, in such things as the revival in Russia of local customs and languages which till now had been crushed, and more broadly, in the re-integration of the old capitalist culture which, because it is understood critically as never before, can, under communism, have part in an original development. ' Without the heritage of capitalist culture we cannot construct socialism. There is nothing from which to build communism except what was left to us by capitalism.' Thus Lenin as Dr. Hecker quotes him. And at least there is in Dr. Hecker's pages some appreciation of that interpenetration of opposites which Lenin was concerned with ; and of the mental revolution which shadows the course of the actual revolution: a recognition that the mind too may have its periods of N.E.P.

Both Dr. Hecker and his friend Professor Ward are Americans who have spent a good deal of time in Russia, Dr. Hecker indeed is partly Russian. Professor Ward is the more tinged with American liberalism, and he has written an enthusiastic study of ' What life might be like when we are not at each other's throats,' as the publisher's blurb has it. But one misses even more in his account the harsher but more vital influence of revolutionary thinking.

MONTAGU SLATER.

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GOOD INTENTIONS IN EDUCATION

THE EDUCATIONAL FRONTIER, written in collaboration by W. H. Kilpatrick, B. H. Bode, John Dewey, J. L. Childs, R. B. Raup, H. G. Hullfish and V. T. Thayer (The Appleton-Century Co., 12/6d.).

The main theme of *The Educational Frontier*, recently published in America, is that educators ' must definitely orient the work of education, both critically and constructively, to the concrete social situation in its needs, defects, conflicts and problems.' The individualistic conceptions which have so long dominated the curriculum must give way to a conception of education adequate to the ' planned and planning ' society of the future. The school, therefore, has a double task: to help the individual ' to get possession of his own soul ' in the face of the modern environment, and to take an active part in the process whereby ' our ever growing technology may be better harnessed to the best interests of society.' In short, education is a social function. If only to drive home this obvious conclusion we should like to be able to recommend the book for wide reading in this country.—Training Colleges, at all events, might read the chapter on professional education with profit.

The reasons that forbid approval of a book so admirable in intention provide an index of the present plight in education. The first difficulty is to find out exactly what the authors mean: ' It is probable that matters of education taken up from the point of view of their integral relations in a forward moving culture would be much less able to avoid coming to vital grips with current conditions . . . Moreover, the positive emphasis which will offset the negative manner of liberalism must, if it is social in purpose at all, take form in the direction of much which is characteristic of common cultural patterns.' They are rarely more explicit than that ; the whole book is, in fact, written in a language so abstract that many pages which one presumes important might mean anything, or nothing.

A second objection is related to the first. Throughout the book there is much talk of ' culture,' yet, politics apart, there is nothing that need disturb an educational Babbitt. Indeed, the positive suggestions are so nebulous that they could be complacently accepted by any ' progressive ' rotarian of Middletown, who would certainly

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interpret in his own way the remark that opportunities should be provided ' for students to practise service to others as a part of their normal school activity.' We may illustrate from the chapter on Adult Education. Professor Kilpatrick, making the point that education is a continuous process, instances the needs of a newly married couple: ' As to actual learning, by all the principles of psychology we learn best when the situation at hand in fact stirs us. For these newly-weds there should be definite but very friendly opportunities to study the various aspects of home-making, each carried as far as an aroused interest would care to go. House planning, house decorating, gardening, cooking, serving, with preparations later on for the baby, and then the care and nurture of the baby—these are obvious possibilities, each to be taken at its time.' It is, of course, essential that the best architectural, clinical etc. information should be available to all, but what, in Heaven's name, is to prevent this Mrs. Newly-Wed from imagining that her needs are supplied by the pages of *Good Homemaking*, or to prevent her intellectual and emotional life from functioning at the level of Gerty MacDowell? Nothing in *The Educational Frontier* supplies an answer, or, indeed, suggests that the question need be raised. The authors, in their justifiable insistence that education is the most potent means of reshaping the environment, have curiously overlooked the fundamental problems covered by such a phrase as ' the quality of living.'

A disqualifying obtuseness is betrayed in the pages dealing with the commercial press, the cinema, advertising and kindred agents of the great levelling process. Such adverse criticism as there is (we learn, for example, that their social effects ' will be bad as well as good ') easily yields to a complacent optimism that finds ' a note of hope ' in the mere progress of invention. ' What printing has done in 400 years to raise the lot of the lowly is a story often told . . . Actual information is certainly a large ingredient in intelligence. Nor is this all. It appears more than possible that readers of the low-type newspaper come on the whole gradually to demand something better. Some newspapermen confidently so claim. . . . If this is general, the process of improvement is inherent.' We are therefore not surprised to find that only one criticism (namely that the pupils are ignorant of the political and economic bias which shapes the policy of the commercial press) is

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levelled at those ' excellent school newspapers . . produced the country over . . by students who have learned to spot news, to formulate leads for their stories that conform to metropolitan stan dards, to write informing headlines and the like.' Nor are we surprised that the radio and the automobile—along with ' the newer developments of refrigeration '—are listed among the ' things which the individual should grasp as evidences of the play of intelligence bringing to man ever increasing possibilities for a richer life.' What this richer life is like is described (though there is evidence nearer home) in Chapters XVII to XIX of *Middletown*, a book whose sober documentation easily deflates the optimism of the Professors. ' The situation at hand,' it is clear, needs a much more pointed attack than anything to be found in *The Educational Frontier*.

We wish to make it plain that we are wholeheartedly in agreement with the aims of the book as already formulated ; it is essential that education should be directed upon living issues. We agree that education should be an instrument for reshaping the economic structure of society—we even admit that ' a sensitiveness towards the healthful display and distribution of foods ' might be encouraged ; though this does not seem a matter for much unction—but we cannot be impressed by a programme of reform which makes no provision whatever for the active training of individual intelligence, percipience and discrimination. Intelligent discussion along these lines is indeed precluded by the style in which the book is written.

On page 163 we find a list of five points demanded in the reorganization of the school programme. Two of them are as follows :

> 2. It is reasonable to expect the school to provide situations for the purpose of leading the student progressively to direct his action by an integrated and unified attitude to which he increasingly gives his allegiance.
>
> 3. It is reasonable to expect the school to encourage the development of independent interests, intellectual, æsthetic, or practical, on the part of its students.

It is significant that the ' æsthetic interests ' of the pupils are regarded as something independent of the main school activities.—Even then they are ignored, except for the remark that ' An interest

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in literature may develop as the student studies the feature stories of a local paper or co-operates in preparing a dramatization of the community interest in relief campaigns.'—We, on the other hand, cannot insist too firmly that ' an integrated and unified attitude ' of any value can *only* be achieved by the careful and intelligent discrimination of the quality of thought and emotion expressed in particular instances. The study of literature, of the use of words, far from being an ' independent interest ' to be ' encouraged,' must be the basis of any educational programme worth the name.

The programme desiderated requires, and will receive, more detailed exposition than there is space for here ; exposition not only of the method whereby ' English ' may become something other than the barren ' appreciation ' plus information that it now is in the schools, but of the shift in emphasis that is needed to transform History, for example, into a fruitful study of the present rooted in the past ; exposition too (and we agree with the authors of *The Educational Frontier* that this is of primary importance) of the way in which a curriculum transformed to deal with living issues would react upon the life of the community. That such a programme bears directly upon practical affairs is not likely to be questioned by those who are familiar with *Culture and Environment* ; it is, in fact, more severely practical than anything offered by the Professors. As for politics, Mr. Eliot once remarked that ' a study of the prose styles of Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Ramsay Macdonald would be instructive,' and although we do not suggest that political interests should remain content with this, half an hour's practical criticism on *The World Crisis*, for example, (Criticism answers the question, What kind of a mind created this?) would certainly instruct a doubtful voter. There will be some, at any rate, who will recognize that there are implications here of greater importance than the direct action by teachers in favour of a collectivist society which a reviewer in *The New Republic* believed to be the logical corollary of *The Educational Frontier*. Having no space for explication, we recommend page 17 of Ezra Pound's pamphlet, *How to Read*.

A concern for quality must be central,—and it must be aggressive. Not only is the present environment powerfully miseducative, it ensures that no *merely* economic or political change can have desirable results. Professor Kilpatrick and his colleagues are not

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aware of this. With the same complacence with which they refer to the ' educative ' value of popular literature, they prophesy that ' the liberation of individual creative activity and the elevation of taste ' will ' follow ' the solution of our economic problems. We have already given our reasons for regarding art as something other than the luxury that the last phrase implies ; it is the easy optimism that provokes final comment. Nothing is more certain than that ' an interest in literature ' will *not* ' develop as the student studies the feature stories of a local paper,' and that ' readers of the low-type newspaper ' do *not* ' come on the whole gradually to demand something better '—the powerful testimony of the newspapermen notwithstanding. It is equally certain that to postpone the consideration of ' the good life ' until ' a later time ' is to shelve the essential issues so completely that, if educational advance is made along this frontier, they are unlikely to be raised again.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE: Legouis and Cazamian (Dent, 10/6d., in one vol.).

This is the best history of English literature extant. That it was written by Frenchmen who may be presumed to have no very sure first-hand judgment in English does not place it at a disadvantage: no history of English literature one has come across was written by critics having first-hand judgment. The section dealing with contemporary work is preposterous—Mr. Eliot and Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie, as poets, share a paragraph ; but it is no more preposterous than any similar enterprise by any English writer of academic standing. One cannot, of course, take very seriously the prolonged study of the student's own literature that doesn't bring some glimmer of intelligence about the present. But the achievement of MM. Legouis and Cazamian is extremely creditable: where things have settled down and acquired safe academic values they have done their work with great skill and intelligence and incomparably better than any English rivals. In recommending their *History of English Literature* one need hardly add that it is as a ' history of English literature ' that one recommends it, so that the reader should not look in it for criticism. Of Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* for instance, we are told that it ' is the most romantic poem that Pope

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has written,' and: 'The form remains mediocre, the language conventional, despite fine poetic lines.' But in none of their English sources could the French authors have found anything more intelligent about the poem or about Pope.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CRISIS. Edited by Dr. Percy Dearmer (Gollancz, 5/-).

This book is very characteristic of the times. It is admirable that such attempts to educate and crystallize opinion should be made, but inevitably they suffer from the situation that calls for them. How, without standards, are we to be educated, and where is authority to be found? It is depressingly significant that authority in literature should be found here in Mr. Ellis Roberts. He discourses on 'The Confusion in Literature,' and it is representative of the confusion that it should be possible to take him for authority. On the other hand, among the contributors there are two Archbishops and various qualified writers.

Undoubtedly there is a public for books like this, and one would like to believe that they make the goodwill they express and appeal to more effective. And certainly such goodwill is not more ineffective than the kind of concern for order represented by the *Essays in Order* reviewed in the last number of *Scrutiny*. The two things are complementary, and invite together a commentary that there is no room here to make.

These books, which bear from different angles on the problems *Scrutiny* is concerned with, will be reviewed in the next number:

RECENT SOCIAL TRENDS IN THE UNITED STATES (London, McGraw-Hill): a magnificent compilation of authenticated data on American life, significant in its achievement and in its limitations.

HISTORY, PSYCHOLOGY, AND CULTURE, by Alexander Goldenweiser (London, Kegan Paul): collected writings of an American sociologist, largely technical, but revealing assumptions and possessing implications of general cultural interest.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS, by Raymond B. Cattell (London, The C. W. Daniel Company).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN, by Susan Isaacs (London, Routledge).

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